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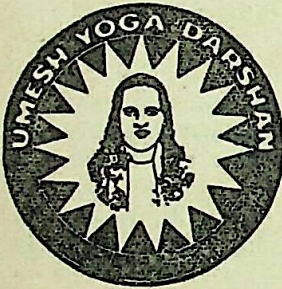
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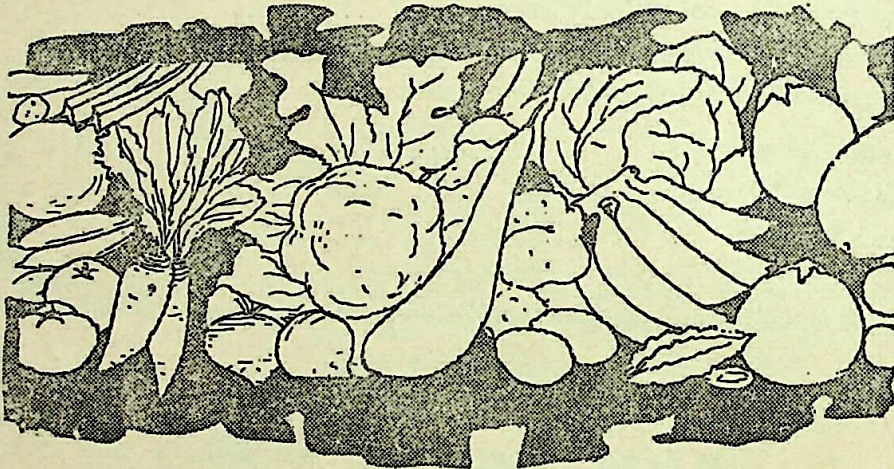
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.... Be bold and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease.
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

THE VEDANTA KESARI

VOL. LIII

AUGUST 1966

No. 4

PARAMĀRTHASĀRA

राहुरदृश्योऽपि यथा शशिविम्बस्थः प्रकाशते जगति । सर्वगतोऽपि तथात्मा बुद्धिस्थो
दृश्यतामेति ॥ १८ ॥

18. Just as in the world (the mythical) Rāhu, though invisible at ordinary times, can be seen during the eclipse in the moon likewise the Self though all-pervading can be seen only in the intellect.¹

¹ The Self can be perceived in the intellect as 'I'. Sri Śankara also says in his Introduction to the Sūtra Bhāṣya : 'This self is not non-object in the absolute sense. For it is the object of the notion of ego.' न तावदयमेकान्तेनाविषयोऽस्मत्प्रत्ययविषयत्वाद् । But this concept, as we shall see later on, is also due to nescience, the Self being *Svayamprakāśa*.

सर्वगतं निरुपममद्वैतं तच्चेतसा गम्यम् । यद् बुद्धिगतं ब्रह्मोपलभ्यते शिष्य ! बोध्यं तत् ॥ १९ ॥

19. That Brahman which is present in the intellect¹ as the cognition (of ego) is to be understood as omnipresent,² without a parallel and non-dual.³

¹ Reflected in the intellect. ² Without being limited by time, space etc.

³ Without any difference such as (1) from the same genus (*svajāṭīya*), (2) from a different genus (*viajāṭīya*) and (3) in itself (*svagata*).

बुद्धिमनोहङ्कारास्तन्मात्रेन्द्रियगणाश्च भूतगणः । संसारसर्गपरिरक्षणक्षमा प्राकृताः हेयाः ॥ २० ॥

20. The intellect, the mind, the ego, the group of subtle elements and the organs,¹ and the group of gross elements²—all these have arisen from the Prakṛti and are capable of creating and maintaining transmigration,³ therefore they are to be abandoned.⁴

¹ The ten organs are : the five sensory and the five motor.

² The five gross elements, are *ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *tejas*, *ap* and *Prithivi*.

³ They are the cause of the transmigratory existence, for it is due to these limitations that the Ātman becomes veiled, as it were.

⁴ One who is desirous of liberation must abandon them as they throw one into bondage.

धर्माधर्मौ सुखदुःखरूपानां स्वर्गनरकवासश्च । उत्पत्तिनिधनवर्णाश्रमा न सन्तीह परमार्थे ॥ २१ ॥

21. In reality, here (in the Self) there is not merit or demerit, nor thought of happiness or misery, nor residing in the heaven or hell, nor is there birth or death, caste or stage (of life).

How then do all these appear to be real ? That is being answered next.

मृगतृष्णायामुदकं शुक्तौ रजतं भुजङ्गमो रज्ज्वाम् । तैमिरिकचन्द्रयुगवद्भ्रान्तं निखिलं

जगद्रूपम् ॥ २२ ॥

22. Like water in the mirage, silver in the mother-of-pearl, serpent in the rope, and the dual moon seen by people with optical defect (*timira*), the entire world phenomenon is only an illusion.

A number of illustrations are given to posit that delusion is a certainty even in this world. Whatever is seen is illusory because it has become an object of cognition, finite and non-self. Illusoriness is that which is sublatable by the knowledge of the substrate.

Q.: Does this inference prove its own illusoriness or not ? If not, there will be a difference in the cognized objects. If it proves, it will be its own destroyer.

A.: Yes, it is self-destructive — *ātmaghātaka* like the scripture, as in the passages : नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन (Br. 4.4.19). In this text duality, in Brahman, is refuted and as such, being in duality, the scripture denies itself also. This is an example of self-destruction. Another example of self-destruction is the faggot that has been lighted to kindle a fire. It burns others as well as itself.

Q.: Then, how is it possible for the illusory object to know reality ?

A.: Who says that the illusory object knows reality ? The Self alone is real and it is self-effulgent, therefore how can the scripture etc., which are illusory reveal the reality ?

Q.: What is their use then ?

A.: To remove the nescience which is also illusory. That alone is the purpose of the scriptures. This is possible even though they are illusory just as the dream-lion. The lion appearing in the dream is able to destroy the whole dream-world and wake up the dreamer, so also the *āgama* (scripture) removes the illusory duality of the waking state. Not only that, sometimes it is seen that an illusory object reveals the real, as in the case of the image of our face in the mirror ; which reveals the true state of the real. Similarly seeing Vishnu

(Continued on page 210)

LIBERATION

THE Hindu scriptures speak of the four *Puruṣārthas* (aims of existence of man) viz., *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (acquirement of wealth), *kāma* (gratification of desire), *mokṣa* (final emancipation). One who is in the world, that is one who leads a life in the household must pursue all these. He cannot be said to be living the life according to the mandates of the *Śāstras*, if he follows the first three to the neglect of the fourth. Neither should his desires be in conflict with righteousness nor his wealth be acquired unrighteously. Though all the four are set forth as aims of human existence, actually the real and the supreme aim is emancipation. For that alone is eternal while the other three are transitory.¹ The *Bhāgavata* informs, 'He, who wants to go beyond the darkness of *samsāra*, of transmigration, should not have attachment for anything which goes against the four aims of existence. Among these too *mokṣa* alone is to be always desired. For the other three are subject to the rule of time (i.e. transient).'²

Why are they then mentioned as aims of existence? The Hindu seers were aware that it was not possible for one and all to take up the final aim all at once. Most of the people are born with a great many desires and impressions. Sometimes the impressions are so strong, the desires so turbulent that human beings even go so far as to break all codes of conduct to get them fulfilled. To overcome such a deplorable state the Hindu sages laid down a scheme of life which ultimately led man to emancipation. He would have to

work out his *samskāras*, tendencies and yet must be aware of his own shortcomings. That was why the *Śāstras* enjoined certain rules, and accepted even acquirement of wealth and satisfaction of desires within the limits of righteousness as aims of existence. However, all the while they remind man that *Mokṣa*, liberation alone is the final goal. There is no joy in the tinsels of this world, in the Great alone is bliss.³ But he would have to experience this for himself, that there is really nothing worth acquiring or enjoying in this world, that the life in the world is a sugar-coated pill. In the *Bhāgavata*, we come across a dialogue between the Rishi Maitreya and Vidura in which Vidura requests the seer to teach him how to live in the world. 'People do actions', says he, 'for the sake of enjoyment but they neither get joy nor rest or peace of any kind. On the contrary they suffer miseries again and again.'⁴ This becomes obvious to all sometime or other. Maybe this idea will remain for a short time in some and in others it may persist. When it becomes an obsession with a person then he refuses to pursue desire and wealth. His life takes a new turn. For finding no rest elsewhere he retraces his steps and goes back to the Lord. Sri Ramakrishna illustrated this fact with a parable: "A bird sat absent-mindedly on the mast of a ship anchored in the Ganges. Slowly the ship sailed out into the ocean. When the bird came to its senses, it could find no shore in any direction. It flew toward the north hoping to reach land; it went very far and grew very tired but could find no shore. What could it do? It returned to the ship and sat on the mast. After a long while the bird flew away again, this time toward the

¹ इह खलु धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाख्येषु चतुर्विधपुरुषार्थेषु मोक्ष एव परमपुरुषार्थः, "न स पुनरावर्तते" इत्यादि श्रुत्या तस्यैव नित्यत्वावगमात्, इतरेषां त्रयाणां प्रत्यक्षेण...श्रुत्या च अनित्यत्वावगमाच्च ।
Vedānta Paribhasha.

² न कुर्यात्कर्हिचित्सङ्गं तमस्तीव्रं तितीरिषुः ।
धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां यदत्यन्तविघातकम् ।
तत्रापि मोक्ष एवार्थ आत्यन्तिकतयेष्यते ।
त्रैवर्ग्योऽर्थो यतो नित्यं कृतान्तमयसंयुतः ।

Bhāgavata, IV. 22.34-35.

³ नाल्पे सुखमस्ति भूमेव सुखम् ।

Chandogya Up., 7.23.1.

⁴ सुखाय कर्माणि करोति लोको
न तैः सुखं वान्यदुपारमं वा ।
विन्देत भूयस्त एव दुःखं
यदत्र युक्तं भगवान् वदेत्तः ।

Bhāgavata, III. v. 2.

east. It couldn't find land in that direction either ; everywhere it saw nothing but limitless ocean. Very tired, it again returned to the ship and sat on the mast. After resting a long while, the bird went toward the south, and then toward the west. When it found no sign of land in any direction, it came back and settled down on the mast. It did not leave the mast again, but sat there without making any further effort. It no longer felt restless or worried. Because it was free from worry, it made no further effort".

Continuing the Master said, 'Worldly people wander about to the four quarters of the earth for the sake of happiness. They don't find it anywhere ; they only become tired and weary. When through their attachment to lust and lucre they only suffer misery, they feel an urge toward dispassion and renunciation. Most people cannot renounce lust and lucre without first enjoying them'. What is the way out? The *Bhāgavata* declares, 'As long as people do not take shelter at Your feet, which grant fearlessness, so long will there be fear, misery, desire, frustration and enormous thirst for wealth, possessions and relations. Further, the false notion of possession, of "mine", which is the root of all tribulations too persists till then'.⁵ Sridhara commenting on this sloka says, fear of losing, misery at loss, desire for more, frustration at failure to obtain the objects, and enormous thirst on account of such frustration will be there for people who have not taken shelter with God.

Sri Ramakrishna asks, 'What is there to enjoy in the world? Lust and wealth?' Then he himself answers the question, 'That is only a momentary pleasure. One moment it exists and the next moment it disappears'. But what a deep attachment it is! How difficult to get rid of! Even when the objects are absent the impressions do not give respite,

like the smell of the flower they persist and the subtle body experiences them through the mind in dreams.⁶ What then to speak of objects that are perceptibly present? They subdue him who hankers after them and make him their slaves. So one should repeatedly convey to one's mind that all things of this world are transient. Perhaps when a thousand times the mind has been told, it may, by the grace of God, be able to comprehend and try to carry out the idea into practice. Once the mind takes up the idea, half the battle of life is won.

II

What is meant by liberation? What is that state? There are different concepts of liberation in the different schools of thought, even among the Hindus. For instance the Advaitin will say that becoming one with Brahman i.e., realizing one's identity with the Supreme is liberation. The Viśiṣṭādvaitin will say, 'to live in the proximity of God and be blissful is the highest aim'. We need not go into the details of these concepts here. What a spiritual aspirant has to know is that there is a state to be attained which is most blissful, reaching which there is no return to this world of tensions and sufferings. And the way to reach such a state is within the grasp of every human being if he but tries sincerely. This state is to be attained here and now. The Upaniṣads point this out. 'If man fails to know (the Self) here, before the fall of this body, he will be subject to rebirth in different bodies, in this creation.'⁷

One notion that is accepted by all Indian philosophers is the theory of rebirth and its concomitant theory of Karma. For unless these two ideas are accepted there seems to be no foundation whatsoever for any effort towards righteousness. If this world is all

⁵ तावद्भयं द्रविणगेहसुदक्षिणितं

शोकः स्पृहा परिभवो विपुलश्च लोभः ।

तावन्ममेत्यसदवयव आर्तिमूलं

यावन्नेतेऽङ्घ्रिममयं प्रवृणीत लोकः ।

Ibid., III. ix. 6.

⁶ अर्थे ह्यविद्यमानेऽपि संसृतिर्न निवर्तते ।

मनसा लिङ्गरूपेण खप्ते विचरतो यथा ।

Ibid., IV. 29. 35.

⁷ इह चेदशकद्वौ दुः प्राक् शरीरस्य विस्रसः ।

ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ।

Kathopaniṣad, 6. 4.

that exists then there is no necessity for anyone to strive for liberation, for as soon as the body falls, the soul, if there is one in the concept of such philosophers, automatically gets rid of bondage. Supposing that they do accept birth in a new sphere, heaven or by whatever name they may call it, that also is a rebirth. This earthly body does not go there. And once a phenomenon is accepted as possible it will be illogical to refuse to admit a possibility of its repetition, for in all our experience here in this world, we find recurrence of every phenomenon, at a nearer or a distant time. The morning is followed by noon and noon by evening and evening by night and so on. Endlessly this has been happening. What special reason can we adduce to assert that what has happened once will not happen again? Unless a satisfactory reason is forthcoming we cannot brush aside this theory of rebirth sententiously and arbitrarily.

Again, the theory of karma, as we have often pointed out, falling in the hands of the ignorant has acquired, to a superficial student, a disparaging meaning. He thinks that this theory has made people imbecile and weak, take everything lying down. But belief in the theory of Karma is not fatalism, but a reminder that what actions you are doing now are going to form your future. Swami Vivekananda points out, 'Every thought that we think, every deed that we do, after a certain time becomes fine, goes into seed form, so to speak, and lives in the fine body in a potential form, and after a time it emerges again and bears its results. These results condition the life of man. Thus he moulds his own life. Man is not bound by any other laws excepting those which he makes for himself. . . . Once we set in motion a certain power, we have to take the full consequences of it. This is the law of Karma'. It is the law of cause and effect, given the cause the effect is sure to come; so take heed says the Indian sage. If you are not careful how you behave now, you will have to reap the consequences later on. Not only are the bad thoughts and deeds reflected in the results which plunge one into misery but the good

ones also do manifest their power for succour. Swamiji maintains that 'as bad thoughts and bad works are ready to spring upon you like tigers so also there is the inspiring hope that the good thoughts and good deeds are ready with the power of a hundred thousand angels to defend you always and for ever'. So let us remember that if anyone attains a high state of evolution of mind and character, he has worked for it and so too can we, if we have the will and strength to strive for it.

If *mokṣa* is such a high state, so covetable why do not people hanker after it, will be the next question we will face. The word *mokṣa* literally means release. Release from the prison of this world, from the chains of bondage to the wheel of birth and death. How can the release be achieved? By finding out its cause. The cause of birth is unsatisfied desires. How do the desires arise? Due to false identification of our real being with the body and mind. The mind fed with the panorama of this world through the different senses craves for the objects of the senses and thenceforth rise desires. This false identification is due to ignorance of our Self. Desires compel man to work. Work again produces results good and bad, to reap the results of which we have to take birth repeatedly. So we see this is a vicious circle. It is a wheel set in motion by ourselves and therefore we have the capacity to get away from it if we but attempt. This too is an instance of the law of Karma. How then can we condemn it?

We are drunk with worldliness, by infinite desires, seemingly wholesome as also obviously unwholesome and therefore invite only unrest. Now the question is how to get rid of this worldliness. Here we do not speak of those who do not want to be cured of this disease but of those who at times want to, but are unable to do so, because of the long-time habit. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Just as the habitual drunkards are given rice-water to bring down the inebriation they are in, so too man must keep company of the holy to get rid of worldliness'. Hearing about God or about our true nature loosens our bonds, our attachments to the things of the world.

People have forgotten their true nature and are running after the gratification of desires, both of the body and the mind, like on a wild-goose chase. So they have to be reminded as to who they are. Do they not know it? Yes, they know it in the wrong way; that is why there is all the trouble. 'This Self is to be seen; (for that, it is) to be heard, thought over and meditated upon.'⁸ For after realizing it alone, is man liberated. 'Reaching which people do not return to this world that is my Supreme abode,'⁹ declares Sri Krishna in the Gita.

III

It is a long and difficult terrain that we have to traverse before we reach God. And mostly it is our own mind that stands as a great hurdle or barrier to our realization of the Godhead as the Dvaitin will say, or to find our identity with Brahman as the Advaitin will put it. Sri Krishna asks us to go cautiously in handling the mind which is too much engrossed in things mundane. First, we have to attain the intellectual conviction of what is ultimately good for us. If once this problem is settled, other things are slowly gathered unto you. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and everything will be added unto you,' assured Jesus Christ. 'Gradually and slowly the mind is to be calmed down by the well discriminated intellect, and made to abide in the Atman; one should not think of anything else. As and when the fickle mind wanders there and then it should be controlled and gathered unto the Self,'¹⁰ says Sri Krishna. It is known to everyone, who has tried, how rebellious the mind is. Only continuous and constant practice, along with intense dispassion for everything other than God can give us emancipation. There is no short cut to liberation, for nothing worth having even of

this world, has been attained without much sacrifice, what then to speak of reaching the highest consummation of life without effort! If anyone assures you to the contrary, that an easier road is possible, beware of such a person. For does not the Rishi categorically state, 'I know that great Puruṣa who is of the effulgence of the sun, and is beyond darkness. Knowing Him alone one goes beyond death. *There is no other path to reach the Supreme*'?¹¹

Lastly the question is: Will this all happen in some other life or has anyone attained liberation here? If it is only a hypothesis which cannot be verified here, you may say that, 'We have no use for it'. If it is a thing attainable here, how to know about it? Saints and sages are the instances of persons who have attained liberation while living. The test of such attainment is in the life of the saint. The scriptures give us descriptions of such a person *in extenso*. 'By them transmigration has been overcome here and now whose mind is in equilibrium. Brahman is faultless and even, therefore, they who are of poised minds are established in Brahman.'¹² 'Seeing the Lord manifest evenly and everywhere one does not harm the Self by the self and therefore attains the Supreme state.'¹³ 'The man whose mind is absorbed (in the Atman) through Yoga and who sees the same (Brahman) everywhere perceives the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.'¹⁴ 'To the Yogi whose mind has become calm, whose activity, has abated, who is sinless and identified with Brahman, comes Supreme bliss.'¹⁵ These are some of the signs and indications by which one can know the knower of Brahman, a realized soul, a liberated soul.

⁸ आत्मा वाङ्मे दृष्टव्यो श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः । *Brahadaranyaka Up.* II. iv. 5.

⁹ यद्धत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम । *Gita.* XV. 6.

¹⁰ शनैः शनैरुपरमेद्बुद्ध्या धृतिमृहीतया ।

आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ।
Also cf. VI. 26. *Bhagavad Gita*, VI. 25.

¹¹ वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तं आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् तमेव विदित्वाऽतिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय ।
Svetasvatropanishad, 3. 8.

¹² इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः ।

निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद्ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः ।

Gita, V. 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, XIII. 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, VI. 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, VI. 31.

MEMOIRS OF SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A free translation of the Bengali book *Smritikatha*)

(Continued from the previous issue)

SARATBABU (SARAT CHAKRAVARTI) writes, 'Lātu Maharaj gave spiritual advice to many no doubt; but he never "initiated" any one, as the word technically means. Though he never gave *mantra* to anyone, there are a large number of devotees who revere him as their guru. Lātu Maharaj himself used to say, "Do you think that a man whispers a *mantra* into another's ears and he becomes his *guru* and the other fellow his *chela*? And the *chela* attains salvation immediately? Is it so very easy as that? The *guru* may give instructions to the disciple, but salvation is a matter in the hand of the Lord. Just as an advocate pleads hard in a court of law in favour of his client and then at last says, to the client, 'Now it depends on the court'. It is like that with the *guru*''.

Swami Siddhananda in his book *Sat-Katha* has put it in the mouth of Lātu Maharaj: 'Do you think a *sādhu* is your sweeper that he would go on sweeping your mind day after day. Once he may clean your mind; after that it is your duty to keep it clean. If you fail in your duty, would not do anything to keep it clean, what can a *sādhu* do? Is it possible for any *sādhu* to scrap out the deep impressions of your *samskāras*? Or do you think a *sādhu* will carry you on his shoulders to the Lord? A *sādhu* will show you the path but you will have to tread it yourself; if you do, you reach God, if you don't you remain where you are'.

On the Dwādaśī day after the Durga Puja a Gujarati professor came to meet Lātu Maharaj, who was then sitting on the first floor and was busy conversing with the devotees. The gentleman waited long at the gate and could not get anyone to announce his arrival to Maharaj. In the course of his conversation. Lātu Maharaj suddenly stopped talking and

asked Paśupati 'to bring upstairs the gentleman waiting at the gate'. It was a little surprising to many: how could he know that a man was waiting at the gate! But to those who knew him a little more intimately it was a familiar affair.

One day a devotee, while leaving Varanasi, remembered Lātu Maharaj in the train and saluted him from there. Lātu Maharaj told the devotees who were present there: 'Just see so-and-so salutes me from the train, would not come to me lest I should ask him to stay at Varanasi and engage himself in spiritual practices. Now he is going on a sight-seeing tour. How foolish! What will he get, roaming about from place to place. One is to settle down at a place and with controlled mind go on practising meditation etc., then one can get something. Where would he get a holy place like this. Viśwanatha is personally present here. O the glory of the place! Whoever dies here gets salvation. Master saw with his own eyes, at the Manikarnika Ghat, Lord Viśwanatha bestowing salvation forthwith by conveying the name of the Lord into the ears of the persons lying on the pyres and the Mother Universal Herself untying the bonds of the *jīvas*'. The author (of these Memoirs) was present when Lātu Maharaj said this.

About the glories of Varanasi and Viśwanatha he waxed eloquent so often. 'Viśwanatha is indeed a "living" God, God who makes his presence felt in various ways. Crores of people come here to worship Him.' Hearing this one devotee said, 'Maharaj, the real (symbol of) Viśwanatha is lying in the Jñānavāpi (a well); and where He is worshipped is not the genuine symbol'.

Lātu Maharaj said in reply, 'Viśwanatha is a natural symbol. Aurangzeb fanatically broke the symbol, but could not remove it altogether.

The symbol has gone deep down into the earth, it is irremovable.'

Even after this the devotee said, 'But in the temple they worship the symbol they have installed.'

Lātu Maharaj: 'Yes, Aurangzeb broke that portion of the symbol which was above the earth's surface. Then the worshippers were inconvenienced. Having come to worship they could not see anything visible to the naked eye. So to remove this inconvenience if somebody has installed a visible symbol on that place he has surely done a commendable act. This has removed the heart's want of thousands of people. Worship is done at the same place; the real thing, viz., the natural symbol, is still there; why should you still make a distinction between the genuine symbol and an imitation one? Lord Viśwanatha is Lord Viśwanatha eternally, can there be an imitation of Him? You should worship Him there, pour out your heart's devotion to Him there; that will bring you whatever is good and beneficial.'

Bibhuti Babu writes: 'One day in the course of my talk with my aunt I referred to Viśwanatha as a piece of stone. That very day when I went to meet Lātu Maharaj I heard him saying aloud from the room on the first-floor, "Rogue, what more but a piece of stone can you find in the temple of Viśwanatha. What spiritual practices have you undergone that Viśwanatha will reveal to you His real form." Terribly afraid, I bowed down to him. Smilingly he asked me the reason of my coming to him so early as that. I replied, "Maharaj, tomorrow I shall leave for Calcutta so I have come to bow down to you and take leave of you." He said, "Very good, but before you leave Varanasi go to the temple of Viśwanatha and worship Him, and take a few offered bilwa leaves with you and eat a bit of them every day".'

It was usual with Lātu Maharaj to ask the devotees to eat daily some thing offered to a deity. And when a devotee was to leave Varanasi he would invariably give some *prasāda* of Viśwanatha or Annapūrṇā to him. He

would say 'Taking *prasāda* increases the purity of the mind'.

Although Lātu Maharaj lived at Varanasi for seven or eight years he went to see Mother Annapūrṇā only once. Looking at the golden image of Annapūrṇā he went into a trance. Observing that, the Mohanta of the temple took him away from the crowd to a comparatively open space. Since then the Mohanta felt especially attracted towards him, and used often to send, special *prasāda* to the Pande Hauli house. He continued sending *prasāda* to Hadar Bag house also when Maharaj shifted to that place. Lātu Maharaj would dry this *prasāda* in the sun and send bits of it to distant devotees by post parcel. He said, 'Annapūrṇā's *prasāda* makes man see better days. It improves the material condition of man'.

It was at the Pande Hauli house that a householder devotee of Rākhāl Maharaj called Lātu Maharaj a liberated soul. When it reached Lātu Maharaj's ears he said, 'Rogues talk of liberated souls (*muktapuruṣas*), as if they are the connoisseurs of them. Yes, "*mukta*". But what kind of "*mukta*", the genuine ones or the imitation ones of the Bombay market?'

[Here the pun is on the Bengali word *mukta* (pronounced by Bengalis as 'mookto') which means both 'liberated' and 'pearls'.]

The devotee who passed that remark on Lātu Maharaj was also present when Lātu Maharaj gave that retort. Not to be defeated, he said, 'Maharaj, imitations are there by lakhs, genuine ones are very rare indeed, e.g., those like you'.

Lātu Maharaj: 'Yes, yes two hundred per cent genuine, my Lord! What have I done, my Master, that I should be considered fit for the bestowal of your grace of liberation? (This was an aside. Then turning to the devotee,) My dear fellow, liberation is a matter of grace, it is in the palm of his hand. If the Master does not will, these comings and goings on this earth will continue. Hence I pray again and again to Master, "Let me come here again and again if I shall have to; but may you be my Guru and let me have 'Loren' as my *Guru*-

bhai ". Or else to be incarnated is a trial and torture.'

One day a devotee brought a relative of his to Lātu Maharaj and asked him to bow down to him. By way of introduction, so to say, he said, 'Bow down to him. He is Śiva personified. All your sins will be washed off'. Lātu Maharaj cried out in rage and agony, 'These rogues are a batch of flatterers. They see Śiva in all, as if Śivas are born or produced by scores. Śiva is that One, Eternal without a second. These rogues are all fawning flatterers. They have come to praise a *sādhu* on his face. They have heard so much, read so much; still they do not remember what Sri Krishna said to Arjuna. To hear one's praise with one's own ears increases one's vanity. And should a devotee do anything to increase a *sādhu's* egoism?' Thus he went on taking the devotee to task up to night-fall that day. The devotee sat still, understanding his own mistake.

One day a U.P. devotee asked him what a householder should do. The talk was in Hindi. We give below a few points culled from it: 'If you want to live a happy and contented life cease criticizing others, never find fault with others; it is far better to sleep away that time. If you find such talks are going on somewhere keep yourself away from it... Try to find good qualities in others; if your eyes are fixed on their good qualities they will not find occasions to look into their faults... As you feel your own pains and griefs, try to feel for others' also in the same way... As far as lies in your power try to help and protect others, never harm anyone... If any one has done you a good turn remember it gratefully. Never fail to give food to your hungry relatives however great their faults might be... But never run into debts, they create worries. Try to live in this world as pure a life as possible; always engage yourself in discriminating between good and evil... And never do whatever your conscience will stigmatize as low and mean; keep your conscience always clean... Never forget God but act depending on His approval and grace; and morning and evening take His name for some time, and if

possible at night also by curtailing your period of sleep a little.'

One day a devotee came and reported to him that X. had become a great devotee that he devoted his whole time to meditation, prayer, *Puja*, and other spiritual practices. Hearing this Lātu Maharaj said, 'That is very good. You also do the same thing. Who prevents you from doing all that? If you but will, you can also be like him'. Then he muttered something we could not hear. Then he openly said, 'As long as wicked people like you are there, there is no future for our society. He has become a devotee, why should that cause jealousy in you? Why should you give it out to so many people here? That man is calling upon the Lord secretly, in solitude; and you are making it public. In a short time people will gather round him. Have you thought over the matter how much distressed he will feel? Nobody should inform friends and relatives of a devotee about his spiritual practices. It pains and spoils him.'

During the holidays of Good Friday of 1915 a devotee went to Varanasi. There he had talks with a man who was very much worried about getting his daughter married. This news reached Lātu Maharaj's ears somehow. When the devotee came to Lātu Maharaj the latter said, 'You see many people will tempt you with big dowry for your son's marriage. Some will say he would give Rs. 500/-; another Rs. 1,000/-. And you thus tempted, will fall into their trap. But have you ever thought about the future of your son and your family? Your son is too young to be married, and he is not educated, he is not yet able to earn much; and the condition of your family also is far from satisfactory. If under such circumstances you get your son married, a couple of years later he will have children whom he will not be able to support. Then this very son will lay the fault of getting him married so early as that on your shoulders. If that happens you should not regret, for the fault will be really yours. Let your son earn something, let him make provision for the maintenance of his family, let him stand on his own legs. Then you may

get him married. Before that never talk of his marriage. That is my considered opinion.'

* * *

News reached Lātu Maharaj from Calcutta that a madcap threw a bomb on Sarada Maharaj (Swami Trigunatitananda) and that he was killed. He became grave and remained so for two or three days. Then he talked about many incidents of his life. A few are given below: 'He was fond of visiting haunted houses. Once he saw such a terrific figure (in fact a shocking malignant eye) that he was seized with fright and was shaking all over. Just then Master appeared there and he became normal. Master brought him out of the house and told him never to indulge in such foolhardiness again. Since then he gave up passing nights in haunted houses. . . Brother Sarada was wonderful in many respects. Nobody could beat him in doing *japa*; again nobody could work half so hard as he. Whatever work was allotted to him he would invariably see it through, he never shirked any work however arduous it might be. He was, so to say, Swamiji's right hand. But for him the magazine, *Udbodhan*, might not have seen the light. He used to implicitly obey Swamiji, except on one thing—he would not consent to go to America. After Swamiji's passing away he was forced to go there, he had no other alternative but to yield. . . . He was a voracious eater but then he could fast equally well. When his body was in good condition he would work like a giant; but if it was slightly indisposed he would at once take to bed. . . . At first he had not much regard for (Holy) Mother; but later he became very much devoted to her. Brother Rākhāl asked him to take up the duty of looking after Mother and her party. When brother Yogin was absent Sarada used to take mother to and from Jairambati and Calcutta. Once when Mother was going to Jairambati in a bullock cart he found there was a big hole on the track; and thinking that when the cart wheel would fall into it Mother would have have a hard jolt, he lay down there with his back up so that

the wheel of the cart may pass over his body and Mother will not be hurt. But Mother saw him doing this from a distance and got down from the cart and scolded him for this.'

In Pande Hauli house a sannyasin of our Math came to pay his respects to Lātu Maharaj, who told him, 'It is good that you have taken *sannyasa*. But never forget the ideal for which you have donned the ochre cloth. If you do you may get a little honour. If you go for this honour you are sure to lose sight of the grand purpose of your life, you will not get the only thing worth attaining, the Truth. Go to a solitary place and plunge yourself in spiritual practices, you will see how rapidly you progress towards the goal. And beware of gossiping, that is a great obstacle to spiritual practices.'

To another *sādhu* he said, 'Don't think the mere donning of ochre cloth will make you a sannyasin. It is not so easy to be a *sannyasin*. They alone whose hearts are crying out for the Lord unceasingly can become *sādhus*. A real *sādhu's* mind is wholly absorbed in the thought of the Lord; they never think of the hardship of their bodies'. When asked about the characteristics of a true *sādhu* Lātu Maharaj, said, 'A real *sādhu* never sees other's defects, he will not have any attachment or aversion for anything or any person, he would ensure safety to all creatures, he will have love and good will for all. A good *sādhu* should always be ready to do good to others; if he is unable to do it he should give him good counsel so that he might give battles to circumstances and overcome them. A genuine *sādhu* is not given to much discussion. He does not look at man's birth but at his acts. Like the Lord, a true *sādhu* has no caste. He does not lay by any thing, nor covet anything. Lord alone he craves for. He is above all fear, he has nothing to hide. He is childlike in his behaviour. Such people are as ready to work as to leave it. They never have the arrogance to think that they are indispensable for any work.'

(To be continued)

ROMAIN ROLLAND : A FORGOTTEN TEACHER

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

THOUGH once hailed as 'the Conscience of the World',¹ Romain Rolland is now an obscure figure in public memory not only outside Europe, but in Europe itself and even in his own country — France. The situation indeed is so tragic that recently when a group of his admirers in India wanted to celebrate his birth centenary which fell on January 29, 1966, and approached some of his countrymen in the nearest town for co-operation in the matter, they met with a cold indifference which was almost like a rebuff.

It is indeed difficult to understand this indifference to a man who only forty years ago was loved and admired throughout the world. Every word he wrote then was avidly read, for it was the word of a trusted leader whose only concern was to guide man to his highest destiny. He taught men to be great and never to compromise with what was vulgar and stupid. By greatness he understood moral greatness. The highest goal in life, according to him, was moral splendour. He knew man's shortcomings, but he knew also that if man so willed he could overcome all his weaknesses. Man must not accept defeat, but go on struggling, constantly and with ever increasing intensity.

Just as Rolland stressed the importance of making a constant endeavour to attain moral excellence in individual and collective life, so also he stressed the importance of cultivating co-operation and understanding among the nations. He loved France best of all, but he was not a patriot of that type who would have it prosper at the expense of another country. He wanted to see freedom and justice assured to every country so that it might develop according to its genius and also contribute to the progress and prosperity of the world as a whole; he also wanted to see the countries

of the world help one another so that together they might promote peace and prosperity to be enjoyed by all of them. He advocated international understanding and fellowship, for he had foreseen long before anybody else that the nations of the world must live at peace with each other, for their individual as well as collective good. Co-operation between the nations was essential, for he argued that no nation was big enough to be self-sufficient just as no nation was small enough to be completely ignored.

These were ideas which went counter to the ideas on which popular minds were then fed and nourished in Europe. Just as it was a characteristic of the times to profess and practise a fiery nationalism, so also was it considered a fashionable and progressive attitude of mind to show a complete disregard for moral values. People were taught to prefer books which pampered their patriotic vanity as well as books which gave them an easy conscience about their own low morals. Unfortunately, there were many authors in Rolland's time who wrote books which not only condoned these tendencies, but even encouraged them. Rolland alone stood rock-like against such vulgar use of talents, for that was what, he thought, writing merely to please the public, amounted to. It filled him with disgust to see how the plays most patronised by the people in those days were those which had adultery as their central theme. It is likely that this was what made him decide that he would write dramas himself, dramas each of which besides having a high moral overtone, would convey a special message to the people. In fact, all his dramas, as indeed all his books, had this as their common distinctive feature.

It must be realized that it took much courage to write such books in those days, for Rolland knew for certain that there was every

¹ Stefan Zweig in his *Romain Rolland: the Man and His Work*, p. 53.

possibility that people would not care for such books and they would probably have little or no sale. And that was exactly what happened, for though Rolland wrote many plays, few of them were produced and fewer still received a favourable notice from the critics. What is interesting is that Rolland did not seem to be particularly concerned about what the critics thought about his dramas; at any rate, he showed no sign that he was prepared to change his subject or his style to suit popular tastes. Each drama he wrote had some central idea — usually a most elevating idea, round which the whole fabric of the book was woven, and it was by the quality of that idea that he wanted his drama judged and not by incidents or characters which he might have introduced as a prop to that idea. This was quite contrary to the concepts and traditions which then prevailed about dramas, and it is no wonder that his dramas proved a disastrous failure at least so far as his own country, France, was concerned. It is rather odd to note that while his own country refused to take any notice of his plays, Germany, where some of them were produced, accorded them a warm reception.

Although any other man would have felt damped by this experience, Rolland continued writing without changing a bit his outlook or his technique, as if there was something compulsive within him which made him go on writing. He now turned to writing heroic biographies, biographies not about great men of action, but about great men of thought, for to him they too were heroes and perhaps greater heroes. The first book he wrote was about Beethoven whose music had always spread a charm over him, reviving his spirits whenever he felt depressed. Beethoven was to him not only a great musician but what was more important, was also a great humanist, and it was to this aspect of his character, which he felt often tended to be overlooked, that he wanted to draw special attention. One would not say that the book was particularly popular, but it was something that made people sit up and take notice. Rolland wrote a series of such biographies and planned to

write more, but it struck him that the pictures he was drawing were perhaps imperfect, for he had to depend upon data about whose accuracy he could not be too sure. He, therefore, decided to write novels in which he would have imaginary persons representing his ideas as forcefully as that might be possible. This was how he came to write *Jean Christophe*, his *Magnum opus*. He had prepared an outline of the book in 1895, but did not finish its first chapter till 1897. The first volume of the book appeared in 1902 and the last — tenth — in 1912. He took a long time in writing the book, but it was good that it was so, for it enabled Rolland's thought-process to go round the full cycle and gave him a degree of maturity which was not there before. This book was the nearest thing to the kind of racial harmony that he wanted to see established in the world. His main contention in the book was that it was necessary, nay essential, that each individual ignore distinctions of race, language, religion, etc., and learn to identify himself with mankind as a whole. Though a novel and a great novel at that, the book reads as if it was a plea for a Fellowship of Mankind and World Brotherhood. Incidentally, the book is a fine example of how it is possible to assign idea the central place in a book and yet make it profoundly moving.

Jean Christophe was an instant success. Even before the French original was completed, the German, English and Spanish translations had begun to appear. Everywhere now people began to talk about the book and its wonderful ideas. Although an ever widening circle of admirers had long begun to grow over the years as a result of the fine books he had turned out one after another, each a passionate plea for harmony in international relations and practice of moral integrity, Rolland had remained a comparatively unknown man till 1910. After the appearance of the book, however, it was different: he was now the world's foremost thought-leader and most admired author. The climax of the process was reached when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1915.

In spite of all that Rolland had written over the years emphasizing the need for co-operation and understanding between the nations, the first World War broke out in 1914. It so shook Rolland that he entered in his diary, 'I wish I were dead'.² The atmosphere of France, as indeed of all belligerent countries, had then become so foul with racial hatred that Rolland found it impossible to live there. He, therefore, decided to go and live in Switzerland, a neutral country. Arriving there, he did not lose time, but forthwith started a campaign urging that the senseless murder of innocent lives be immediately stopped. He first wrote to scientists and artists all over the world asking them to say publicly that they condemned the brutalities going on in the name of war. Many did not reply, while some tried to justify them. Undeterred by this rebuff, he continued the fight alone, writing innumerable letters, articles, pamphlets, etc., trying to educate the public about the folly of war. When at last the war ended and peace was signed on June 26, 1919, he issued an appeal urging that an attempt be made to outlaw war permanently. Rolland was now a great moral force commanding respect everywhere, for it was readily recognized that while everybody else had betrayed the cause of humanity in the heat of the passions of the moment, he alone remained calm and held aloft the banner of peace, understanding and unity. People from all over the world wrote to him seeking advice whenever they felt there was a moral issue about which they did not know what stand to take. He had truly become now the conscience of the world.

It was sometime in the twenties that Rolland chanced to read Dhangopal Mukherjee's book about Ramakrishna, *The Face of Silence*. The character of Shri Ramakrishna so impressed him that he decided to learn more about him and then write a book about him himself. For two years he went on collecting materials from all available sources and then wrote the two magnificent books, *The Life of Rama-*

krishna and its companion volume, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*. Explaining why he felt drawn towards Ramakrishna, he said, '... it is because Ramakrishna more fully than any other man not only conceived, but realized in himself the total Unity of this view of God, open to all rivers and all streams, that I have given him my love ; and I have drawn a little of his sacred water to slake the great thirst of the world'.³ To Rolland who had all his life fought for unity amongst the world's diverse races, systems and traditions, it was a great joy to find that unity not merely an abstract concept but a living reality in the person of Ramakrishna. The fact that in Ramakrishna's case that unity was achieved through religion did not minimize its importance. Lest any attempt be made to under-rate the beauty and grandeur of Ramakrishna's sense of unity or question its relevance to a world obsessed with what it thought was rationality, Rolland went to a great length to explain how a common goal was being pursued by men who denounced religion as well as by men who accepted it, if both were trying to reach the final truth and also improve society. He said that whether the system was called religion or communism, humanism, or rationalism, it was nothing but a search for truth and for a happier life. Ramakrishna had chosen the path of religion, but he, too, was a worthy member of 'the great army of the Spirit'⁴ engaged in the great task of making the world a better place for everybody. His experience, therefore, was part of man's common heritage and in that sense, deserved to be studied and respected.

In introducing Ramakrishna to his Western readers he said, 'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of spiritual life of three hundred million people. . . . He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time. But his inner life embraced the whole

² *Ibid.*, p. 266.

³ Romain Rolland's *Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

multiplicity of men and God'. He also said, 'Allowing for difference of country and of time, Ramakrishna is the younger brother of our Christ'.

It is important to note that Rolland's interest in Ramakrishna was due chiefly to the fact that he 'embraced the whole multiplicity of men and God'. Here was at last a man, who, though born in a strange country and treading a path entirely different from his, had made real a dream he had cherished all his life.

Rolland must have been the saddest man when the second World War broke out. He saw his life's work defeated. What perhaps hurt him most was the fact that he was not able this time to fight against it in the manner he had done on the earlier occasion, for it is said that he was put into a concentration camp

immediately after the war broke out. How must this bold, independent, spirit have chafed against such restraint! Although the exact circumstances are not known, happily death was not long in coming to release him from this indignity. War never claimed or shall claim, a greater martyr. It is possible to question, as indeed it was questioned even when Rolland was at the height of his fame, the literary merits of his works, but few will deny that as a humanist, a lover of peace, and a moral teacher, he is still to be surpassed. What amazes one is the fearlessness with which he fought all his life for the realization of the ideal closest to his heart, unity of mankind. It was this fearlessness again which led him to his inevitable martyrdom, giving to his life of struggle for ideals, a finale, he himself would have liked most.

CAN ONE BE SCIENTIFIC AND YET SPIRITUAL?

(Continued from the previous issue)

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

VII

WE may now turn to the consideration of some most fascinating and revealing findings of religion resulting from experiments with God according to scientific methodology.

Sri Ramakrishna's life⁴² was a long saga of enquiry into the phenomenon of God. In this he never deviated from the scientific methodology of observation and experiment. His life, therefore, should be of great interest to the awakened scientist for a special study of the spiritual facts of existence.

Sri Ramakrishna was not satisfied simply to hear about God. In his personal religion, believing in God meant seeing God: if God is, He must be seen.

Therefore, Sri Ramakrishna wanted to see God and he turned his whole life and his world into a vast laboratory for experimenting on and with God.

As an astronaut disciplines his body and mind in a special way for travelling in a space vehicle, Sri Ramakrishna disciplined himself entirely for working in his great laboratory, which was his life and this world itself, with the one end in view: of finding the truth about God.

Because he would see God, he did not close his eyes for months on end. He did not take God for granted. Like any scientist, he tentatively accepted the available data coming from the previous seers of God, but himself experimented in his laboratory with all the painful grinding it involved. Only on the basis of his own finding and seeing he could so forcefully say in answer to Swami Vivekananda's frontal question, 'Sir, have you seen God?': 'Yes, I have seen God'.

During his years of spiritual discipline, Sri Ramakrishna had adopted methods which were thoroughly experimental. What was this

image he was worshipping ? Was it merely a block of black stone gracefully sculptured ? Or was the Divine Mother living and breathing here ? With that divine audacity, which in the case of Sri Ramakrishna was another name for infinite love for God, he held his hand before Kali's nose to find out whether or not She breathed. And, lo, She breathed ! 'I actually felt Her breath on my hand,' said Sri Ramakrishna.⁴³

Do you call this scientific, or not ?

If you are hard-headed enough, you will say : "No, I cannot call it scientific until I find Kali breathing when I hold my hand before Her nose. In other words, when I am able to repeat the same experiment with the same results, then I say, 'Very good'. Not before that. So the question is : Will Kali breathe on my hand ?"

We shall venture to say yes, provided you fulfil the same conditions which Sri Ramakrishna did. Are you ready ? Sri Ramakrishna loved Kali so much that he was ready to cut his throat because he had not seen Her. Bring that intensity of love coursing through your entire being, forget the world entirely in that one absorption, and then hold your hand before Kali's nose. The result will be the same for the same experiment.

At this point, before we proceed further to dwell upon Sri Ramakrishna's experimental approach to the spiritual phenomenon, we want to discuss some of the objections commonly raised by scientific thinkers against the view of religion as a science based on experience. It seems clear that these objections can be raised only by those who have no direct knowledge of what genuine religious experience means. However, since deep spiritual experience is a rare and unpublicized commodity, and since these objections are raised by many sincere and honest thinkers, we should discuss them with as much care as possible.

We have already quoted Einstein's view that science is concerned with the knowledge of objective fact, while religion provides us with goals and aspirations. This is a genuine and important insight, but it can also lead to a dangerous dichotomy : Science seeks truth

but not goodness, while religion pursues goodness and ultimate values but not truth. This view, narrowly held, accords to religion a valid and important function in human life provided that it surrenders all claim to constitute "knowledge" or "truth". Real knowledge, this view asserts, means "scientific knowledge", knowledge acquired through the scientific method as it is customarily understood. The claims of religious faith — that God exists, that He has a tender care for all creatures, and so on — represent the innate urge toward goodness and love which may be man's most wonderful faculty ; but they are not knowledge in any strict sense. This outlook is rather popular among liberal scientists at the present time.

The trouble with this attitude is that it does not and cannot satisfy the man of religion. Man's faculties do not operate singly, divorced from each other. There cannot be love without some knowledge. We cannot love God without knowing Him — or at least thinking that we know Him. We must believe Him to be the supreme Fact ; otherwise, we cannot worship Him at all.

Thus true religion must claim to be knowledge. The mystic claims that his experiences are not just ravishingly beautiful, subjective sensations, but convey knowledge — knowledge of the spiritual realm. This attitude throws the sceptical scientist back on his fundamental philosophical question : What is experience ? What is knowledge ? And how does knowledge arise from experience ? The perplexities of the scientist, and possible avenues for their removal, may be grasped through the following imaginary dialogue between a sceptical scientist and a student of mystical religion.

Scientist : Take the spiritual experiences of Sri Ramakrishna. How can they be regarded as conveying "objective truth" ? Probably his austerities led him to perceive what he *wanted* to perceive, rather than an objective, independently existing, reality.

Religious Student : Sri Ramakrishna himself faced this problem. At times he had misgivings, and feared that his visions were hallu-

cinations. At times he doubted his own conclusions and was never at rest until he had proofs satisfying to himself of the truth and validity of his realization. Besides, you do not surely want me to take it that the scientist is discovering things without *wanting* to discover !

S. : You indeed make a point there ! This enhances our regard for his sincerity. But it may be that, however intense his sincerity was, no important discovery of objective knowledge is possible by the 'spiritual' method.

R. : To resolve your doubts, you must test the "spiritual" method by practising it yourself.

S. : But I want some prior assurance that spiritual discipline will not mean simply hypnotizing myself to see the universe in the way I want to see it.

R. : Such prior assurance, in completely convincing form, cannot be given. But among teachers of mystical religion there are two practical criteria for testing the spiritual validity of the experiences of any individual. The first of these tests is consistency ; the experiences of the individual should agree with the recorded spiritual insights of others who have practised the same spiritual disciplines in the past. If I claim to have an experience of the Divine which is quite different from anything recorded by previous knowers of God, it is more than likely that I am deluded.

S. : This test is not too convincing — at least to one like me who doubts the fundamental assumptions. As you imply, your experience will never be consistent with the experiences of *all* others, but only of those others who have practised the same preparatory disciplines. Now suppose there were a drug with the property that whoever takes it sees elephants all around him. If after taking this drug I claim that there are elephants in front of me, can I justify my claim by appealing to the universal experience of all those who have taken the same drug ? Of course not. Perhaps the austerities required in spiritual life bear the same relation to spiritual experience as the drug to the elephants.

You mentioned two criteria for judging the so-called spiritual experiences. What is the other one ?

R. : Christ's test : "By their fruits ye shall know them." The effect of a mere subjective sensation of goodness and love is bound to wear off, especially under trying circumstances. But in a spiritual experience one has the conviction of knowing a Reality beyond one's changeable self, which is present and can be called upon regardless of mood or circumstance. As a result, one becomes established forever in such wonderful qualities as fearlessness, unselfishness, and love ; for they are based on a Reality which does not change, not on a momentary preference. It is as Socrates said : "Virtue is knowledge".

S. : This test seems more substantial than the first one ; but I am still not convinced. Even if I grant the genuineness of the wonderful ethical qualities you mention, would not the *conviction* of knowledge gained, even if a false conviction, produce the same ethical fruit as knowledge actually gained ?

R. : I think not, because the knowledge of which we are speaking is more than intellectual knowledge. However, let us not pursue this point further. Do you know what your scepticism shows ? It shows that spiritual experience cannot be understood "from the outside". There was wisdom in the old Christian adage : "First have faith ; then you will understand".

But let me ask you this : Don't you also believe certain things, not because they have been proved "from the outside", but simply because you prefer to believe them ?

S. : I know that my view of the world is coloured by likes and dislikes. But the subject-matter of science consists precisely in those factual aspects of things which are not affected by likes and dislikes, such as position, velocity, mass, chemical composition, and so on. That is why I cling to science as a realm of objective truth. But in so-called spiritual matters I find no such objective ground to stand on, from which to judge whether a given experience represents reality or is a result of self-hypnotization.

R. : That is because you have not searched for such a ground.

S. : But how would I recognize such a ground if I found it? Exactly what kind of thing am I to look for?

R. : We are told by sages that that ground cannot be described in words. Instead of trying to point out to you the positive ground of spiritual experience (which I could not do!), let me answer negatively by observing that even the validity of the impersonal physical facts to which you cling cannot be "proved". Philosophers recognize that in the acceptance of any physical fact there is an element of arbitrariness — including a judgment of value and importance. A single momentary perception does not suffice to distinguish fact from hallucination, waking from dream. An additional two-fold test is always (but usually unconsciously) applied: (a) consistency with other sense-perceptions, (b) a general judgment that physical facts are important. Physical facts stand out for you as reliable and "real", not because you have validated them by any criterion external to the facts themselves, but because they are internally remarkably self-consistent, and also because you decide (arbitrarily, I believe) to attribute importance to them. It is just like Dr. Johnson who, when someone questioned the reality of the physical world, stamped his foot on the ground and said: "Look, the world is real!" If someone decided to question the objective reality of all his sensations — including those of his body, mind, and ego — his position would be quite logical. Your only answer could be that *you* prefer not to!

S. : And you, too, I imagine! Who ever *really* denied matter in the way you are suggesting? The acceptance of the material world is not arbitrary. We have no alternative, except to commit suicide!

R. : Yes, there is an alternative. The great mystics, like Sri Ramakrishna, have really and truly known the arbitrariness of our common perception of matter, mind, and ego; and have found that there is indeed an alternative realm of experience, the realm of the Spirit. Can we deny that the universe is

vaster and contains more possibilities for experience than we realize? How inherently unlikely that, in this mysterious universe, the common day-to-day vision of the average man should be the sole criterion of reality! The realm of the Spirit is internally self-consistent, and, to those few who live in it, carries infinitely more weight and value than the realm of matter. The words and actions of the great saints and mystics, if approached with an open mind which admits "this might be so!", strongly suggest that "this *is* so!" — that there does exist an alternative vision of reality, very different from our usual acceptance of matter as the primary reality.

S. : Their words might suggest this; but how could their actions do so?

R. : "By their fruits ye shall know them." If I truly know that God is real and that my existence is in Him, will I seek my own welfare like a selfish person? In the *Bhagavad-Gita* we find beautiful descriptions of the behaviour of the man illumined with spiritual knowledge.

"When a man completely casts off all the desires of the mind, his Self finding satisfaction in Itself alone, then he is called a man of steady wisdom. He who is not perturbed by adversity, who does not long for happiness, who is free from attachment, fear, and wrath, is called a *muni* of steady wisdom. He who is not attached to anything, who neither rejoices nor is vexed when he obtains good or evil—his wisdom is firmly fixed. When he completely withdraws the senses from their objects, as a tortoise draws in its limbs, then his wisdom is firmly fixed.....He is said to be a steadfast yogi whose heart, through knowledge and realization, is filled with satisfaction, who, having conquered his senses, never vacillates, and to whom a clod, a stone, and gold are the same. He who has equal regard for well-wishers, friends, and foes; for those who are related or indifferent to him; for the impartial and the malicious; and even for the righteous and the sinful—he stands supreme.....He who never hates any being and is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from the feeling of "I" and "mine" and even-minded in pain and pleasure, who is forbearing, ever content, and steady in contemplation, who is self-controlled and possessed of firm conviction, and who has consecrated his mind and understanding to Me—dear to Me is the one who is thus devoted to Me. He by

whom the world is not afflicted and whom the world cannot afflict, he who is free from joy and anger, fear and anxiety—he is dear to Me.⁴⁴

Such behaviour, followed consistently under all circumstances, would hardly be possible for a man who in his heart of hearts sees matter and change as the sole reality.

S. : I admit there is nothing logically wrong with your position. In fact, I envy your being able to adhere to it ; for obviously it enlarges enormously the horizons of life. But, for myself, it seems extremely improbable. Science we know and can trust ; this other realm that you postulate is an unknown quantity. To my mind, religious experience is a psychological abnormality ; that is all.

R. : Now—as you admit—you are reacting to the prejudice and long habits of thought. But who can be blamed ? When living examples of the spiritual life are so rare, how can the individual be blamed for disregarding the verbosity of the churches ? The man who has experiential knowledge of God has such firm inner mandate, and he is so supremely satisfied with the sovereignty of his situation, that he is simply amused to be called “abnormal”. He is not in the least anxious to be normal in an unreal world of phantom where doubt itself is the God. Perhaps the time is coming when a new sense will dawn on this materialistic society of ours—a sense that the vision of God is a possibility for every life. Then, even if everybody does not struggle for it, those who do desire the direct experiential knowledge of God will find encouragement from the time-spirit, rather than mockery and doubt.

After realizing the Divine Mother in one way by the sheer power of his all-consuming devotion, Sri Ramakrishna practised the disciplines of Tantra on an experimental basis under the guidance of an extraordinary nun, Bhairavi Brahmani. She procured all the ingredients needed, besides teaching him the methods of those complicated ritualistic worships, and Sri Ramakrishna had the spiritual experiences as narrated in the scriptures. This is one of the most astounding records of religious history in the world.

On several occasions scholars came and told him that what they had read in the scriptures they found verified in his experiences.⁴⁵ In other words, in Sri Ramakrishna's life, religion was being tested as if in a laboratory, and proved on an experimental basis.

Narration of his practice of the disciplines of non-dualistic Vedanta reads like the story of a research scholar applying himself to do a most difficult experiment under expert guidance. Initial difficulties over-power him for a while, but then he astounds his teacher with the quickness of his complete success.

The experiment took place in a small building in the temple-garden of Dakshineswar, near Calcutta. The building stands there even today. After closing the door, Totapuri, the stern teacher, asked the disciple to withdraw his mind from all things phenomenal and to concentrate it on the Ātman. But at the first attempt Sri Ramakrishna could not do it. Though he could easily withdraw his mind from everything phenomenal, constantly the blissful Divine Mother, whom he had worshipped with all his love all these years, stood before his mind's eye.

Totapuri got furious at this failure of his disciple. Picking up a piece of glass, that was lying in the room, with that he pierced the spot between the disciple's eyebrows, and said : “Collect the mind here to this point”. The therapy worked. This time when the Divine Mother appeared, Sri Ramakrishna, as he narrated later, cut the Mother's image in two with the sword of Knowledge and his mind being freed from the consciousness of the personal aspect of God, he experienced the *nirvikalpa samādhi* in which he realized the identity of the Ātman with Brahman, of the soul with the supreme spirit ;—the great equation taught in theoretical Vedanta. The *samādhi* lasted for three days. The teacher, who had to believe it, having seen, was astounded beyond measure, for he himself had taken forty years to attain this experience.⁴⁶

Here again we find the same experience being repeated on an experimental basis. Another knowing scientist of Ātman was quick to appreciate this.

When Sri Ramakrishna was deep in these experiments — by this time he had become a monk, also — his young wife Sarada, whom he had well-nigh forgotten in his mad pursuit after God, appeared at Dakshineswar. Totapuri, his teacher, said how would he really know that he had conquered his senses if he could not live with his wife undisturbed?

So Sri Ramakrishna proceeded to make the most difficult experiment of his life — walking on the razor's edge, as it were, and coming through the trial unscathed. Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada shared the same bed for several months. And throughout he remained the monk that he was, and she the immaculate virgin.

One night, finding his wife asleep by his side, Sri Ramakrishna said to himself.

Here is a woman's body which the world holds dear. But he who takes pleasure in it is confined to this body and cannot realize God. Tell me, frankly, whether you want this or God. If the former, then here it is.⁴⁷

His purified mind answered this searching question by merging in a *samādhi* so deep that it lasted through the whole night. Next morning with considerable difficulty he was brought back to normal consciousness.

Sri Ramakrishna's experiments with God and religion did not stop within the scriptural bounds of Hinduism. After having verified the fundamental truths preached by Hinduism to his complete satisfaction, he now proceeded to experiment with God through disciplines and methods taught in other religions. This adventure into realms of the spirit is characterized by a scientific temper, normally not much manifest among religious teachers or seekers.

He took regular initiation into Islam, practised the disciplines as required of a votary of this faith, and had appropriate spiritual experiences.⁴⁸

Realization of Christ came to him rather easily, but in all its fullness.⁴⁹

So when Sri Ramakrishna said in his after-life,

"All doctrines are so many paths; but a path is by no means God Himself. Indeed one can

reach God if one follows any of the paths with whole-hearted devotion",⁵⁰

he was making a scientific statement on the basis of experiential findings. All his spiritual talks were made on the basis of observation, experiment and experience in the laboratory of life.⁵¹

In this, Sri Ramakrishna was not blazing a new path, but treading on the traditional path of Indian spirituality. In authentic Indian tradition, after learning from the teacher, the student was always expected to go within and "see" God or *Ātman* for himself. Personal experience was taught to be one of the most valid and convincing proofs of truth.

This spiritual empiricism⁵² has been a bold feature of Indian spiritual search and research down millenniums, beginning from the Vedic times and continuing up to the present day. One of the reasons of India's capacity to keep producing in an unbroken line great saints, is to be sought here. This feature, which was somehow never lost to India, was activated in Sri Ramakrishna's life to an amazing degree.

When his disciples came, among whom were some who did not hide their frontal scientific bias, Sri Ramakrishna accepted their unpronounced challenge with masterly ease.

And because he himself was fully convinced about the validity of the approach which we call scientific, he not only never frowned on any who had pronounced scientific leanings; on the other hand, he encouraged them.

One day when a visitor was arguing with Sri Ramakrishna on a point which he could not accept, a devotee said to the visitor with pious annoyance: "Why don't you accept what he says?" Sri Ramakrishna turned on the devotee sharply and said:

What sort of man are you? To accept words without conviction! Why, that is hypocrisy! I see you are only a counterfeit.⁵³

Mahendranath Gupta ('M'), the writer of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, reports as an eye-witness an amazing phenomenon about Sri Ramakrishna's communion with God. He says:

"This is the test of the validity of the practised spiritual disciplines : to see God and talk to Him. It will not do to only close the eyes and say : Well, I have had vision of God. One must see God, touch Him and talk to Him. Sri Ramakrishna used to talk to the Divine Mother in the presence of people filling a whole room. He would swear, 'I tell you in truth. Mother has come'. All could only hear the talk from one side. An amazing thing indeed ! And why did he do so ? It was no freak that he was performing. There are people who claim vision of God for themselves or others on uncertain grounds. Therefore he explained things with required clarity. In this age of scepticism, to the extent possible he has revealed to everybody the phenomenon of God. It was, as it were, a public demonstration of God, by holding Him before their eyes for carrying conviction. And this happened in a room full of people most of whom had a modern sceptical outlook as a result of their English education. Men were not prepared to readily believe in the spiritual phenomenon. So he had to testify in a way which left no scope for reasonable doubts. This was why Digby said : 'He revealed God to weary travellers.'⁵⁴ He has revealed God even to the man in the street."

As Sri Ramakrishna experimented with God to be sure about Him, his disciples in their turn experimented with Sri Ramakrishna to be convinced about the truths of his experiences and sayings.

When Sri Ramakrishna was passing through a God-intoxicated state, he developed various ailments for which no easy cure could be found. Two of his well-wishers adopted a somewhat dubious method for the cure, which somehow turned out to be a clinical test of Sri Ramakrishna's complete renunciation of lust and mastery over his senses, and also of the fact that it was possible to look upon even a fallen woman as Divine Mother.⁵⁵

There is on record this description of another type of test Sri Ramakrishna underwent when he was in the transcendental state of consciousness :

As Sri Ramakrishna sang, he left his seat and began to dance. The devotees, too, stood up. Every now and then the Master went into *samadhi* and the devotees gazed at him intently. Dr. Dukari touched the Master's eyeballs with

his finger to test the genuineness of his *samadhi*. This disgusted the devotees.⁵⁶

It was natural for the devotees to be annoyed. But Dr. Dukari rendered posterity a service in that he attested to the fact that one could altogether transcend body-consciousness and be immersed in super-consciousness, leaving aside the body as if it were dead. And again he could return to the consciousness of the body.

Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly asked his disciples to test his realizations. Once he said to Narendra, "Test me as the money changers do their coins. You must not accept me, until you have tested me thoroughly."⁵⁷ Sri Ramakrishna's phenomenal renunciation of wealth had affected his body, mind, and nervous system in such a way that he could not even touch money. But how was a skeptic to be sure that it was not an affectation ? So his chief disciple Narendranath — who later, as Vivekananda, said religious phenomena should be scientifically tested — proceeded to test the genuineness of that intensity of Sri Ramakrishna's spirit of renunciation. His biographer narrates the incident this way :

One day when the Master was absent in Calcutta, Narendra came to Dakshineswar. Finding there was no one in his room, a desire arose in his mind to test the Master's renunciation of wealth. So he secreted a rupee under the bed. He then went to the Panchavati for meditation. After a time, Sri Ramakrishna returned. No sooner had he touched the bed than he started back in great pain. Wondering he was looking round, when Narendra came in and watched him silently. An attendant examined the bed, and the presence of the rupee was disclosed. Both the attendant and the Master were surprised. Narendra walked out of the room. When the Master was told of it later, he was glad that Narendra had tested him.⁵⁸

We too have reasons to be glad, for thus in the case of Sri Ramakrishna even the skeptic finds grounds for respectful study of the religious phenomenon when it is so carefully separated from the legendary and the hocus-pocus. That renunciation can become involuntary habit of the very nervous system proves certain possibilities of man about which

modern man tends to cherish uncertain, unwholesome, and unscientific views.

By himself practising religion on an experimental basis and by himself submitting again and again to all kinds of tests at the hands of his disciples, Sri Ramakrishna in effect showed how one can be scientific and yet spiritual — though, academically speaking, he was innocent of science.

Swami Vivekananda had studied science and was devoted to the scientific method all his life. If he could submit himself entirely at Sri Ramakrishna's feet so as to feel proud of calling himself Sri Ramakrishna's eternal slave, one of the reasons for this was that his Master also completely satisfied his ideal of scientific approach to the spiritual phenomenon. In fact he is reported to have said that he learnt science from Sri Ramakrishna.⁵⁹

Sri Ramakrishna carefully tended Narendra's scientific mind, sometimes even urging him to be *truly* scientific in his approach to the spiritual phenomenon. When, in the rigidity of his youthful loyalty to the impersonal aspect of God, Narendra refused to respect the personal aspect of God, Sri Ramakrishna admonished him, saying, "My boy, try to see the Truth from all angles, and through every perspective".⁶⁰ This, a rare advice coming from a spiritual teacher, constitutes a challenge to the fanatical devotees of science who reject the spiritual for no better reason than that they have done nothing worth mentioning for investigating into its validity in the proper and adequate manner.

The clashes and the concurrences between the scientific and the spiritual in the method of Sri Ramakrishna's training and the type of discipleship which Narendra brought to his Master makes a fascinating reading. In this encounter Narendra was always to find that Sri Ramakrishna not only fulfilled his scientific demands more than he knew how to ask for, but that his Master also helped him to see the fact that direct proof of all things need not necessarily be attainable through one means in order to be valid. If you do not see the stars at daytime it does not mean that the stars are not. If you do not find Brahman so as to be

photographed, it does not mean that Brahman is not. With keen open eyes certain things are seen ; with closed concentrated eyes, other things are seen. One order of what is being seen need not necessarily be lesser truth than the other.

We read in Swami Vivekananda's life how with his scientific spirit of enquiry perfectly alert and alive he had to accept the fact of transcendental truth of God being everything. To see is to know ; to know is to believe. This way came Swami Vivekananda's scientific faith in the non-dualistic Vedanta. Hence, to him it was as valid as any scientific knowledge.⁶¹

Approaching realities of life and study of nature in an open-minded way, Swami Vivekananda divined that for meaningful existence the task before man is wider than mere controlling of outer nature. He places before mankind an ampler and bolder perspective of life which respects both science and religion as instruments for working out the total emancipation of man. For solving the problems of existence, for attaining liberation of the spirit or self-fulfilment, in an age dominated by science, it will be difficult to get better directive principles than those which are to be found in these words of Vivekananda :

Man is man so long as he is struggling to rise above nature, and this nature is both external and internal. Not only does it comprise the laws that govern the particles of matter outside us and in our bodies, but also the more subtle nature within, which is, in fact, the motive power governing the external. It is good and very grand to conquer external nature, but grander still to conquer our internal nature. It is grand and good to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will, of mankind. This conquering of the inner man, understanding the secrets of the subtle workings that are within the human mind, and knowing its wonderful secrets, belongs entirely to religion.⁶²

The goal of religion, according to Swami Vivekananda, 'is to manifest the Divine within, by controlling Nature, external and internal', and 'be free'.⁶³

There are scientists who try to ignore the spiritual phenomenon for the simple reason

that they are unprepared to undergo the disciplines required for comprehending it. Swami Vivekananda calls them 'surface scientists', for 'it is not the sign of a candid or scientific mind to throw overboard anything without proper investigation'.⁶⁴

Again, there are religious people who show less than due regard to knowledge of science and its very important role in affairs of men, simply because they are not psychologically prepared to discipline their minds in a scientific way. These people, who may be called surface spirituals, are slow to see the point that if, according to them everything happens according to the will of God, then may be God is well pleased that science is dealing some hard blows on theological superstition of ages! If God is Truth, and if the scientist is seeking this truth, forgetful of God in a formal way, yet he will be spiritual.

"What is truth? Truth is something so noble that if God could turn aside from it, I could keep the truth and let God go,"⁶⁵

said Meister Eckhart. Here is a truly spiritual man whom even the most self-satisfied scientist can respect.

Neither 'surface scientist' nor 'surface spirituals' are going to show mankind ways of solving the problems of existence. A time has come, a new time, when we require an altogether new structure of thought, a new realism, a new idealism, and more comprehensive terms of reference to face our highly complicated problems which are today global in their setting, and bewildering in their ramifications.

The monograph captioned 'The Integrity of Science' issued by the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare, which we referred to before, concludes with these words:

"In its self-interest, society must respect, and indeed encourage, the integrity of science. Too often science is regarded only as a means of satisfying immediate social demands, and such demands sometimes produce pressures which erode the integrity of science. Society must recognize

more clearly than it now does, that such pressures are self-defeating, and, given the hazards involved in a faulty understanding of the power of modern science, exceedingly dangerous as well.

"If scientists want to strengthen the integrity of science, and if citizens learn to respect the importance of the integrity of science to society, we can enter the new age of science in the hope that it will properly serve the welfare of man."⁶⁶

This indeed is a pious collection of thought neatly put together. But the snag comes in the 'if-s' of the last paragraph.

Can any world organization, a scientific body, ever prevent greedy, avaricious, and selfish inclinations of the unregenerate man from taking their own courses unless the individual can be persuaded to take better and more enlightened care of himself for his own good?

It may serve a useful purpose to repeat what we have once said before: if we would venture to go to the root of this problem without being lost in its various manifestations, what is necessary today is to take — through science and religion — a more comprehensive and penetrating view of reality and pattern the spheres of one's thought and activity, and the human civilization, in the light of that integral vision.

And therefore man must address himself to these tasks simultaneously — the conquest of inner and outer nature; in other words, to becoming spiritual and scientific in one. This is the new demand of human civilization on man. How do we meet this demand? Where do we get the guidance for building life in a new way?

One great teacher of mankind who appears to have worked deliberately on this problem is Swami Vivekananda. This is proved by the fact that in founding the monastic order bearing his master's name, Ramakrishna, he made it obligatory for his followers to cultivate and disseminate the knowledge of science along with knowledge of religion.

One of the most fundamental and important teachings of Swami Vivekananda is that the challenge of the time requires us to become truly scientific and truly spiritual at the same

time. In his teachings he left with us the solution of this problem, in seed-form, which we require to cultivate in the world of today

in the best possible manner in the widest possible areas of human thought and action.

(Concluded)

⁴² *Vide*: (1) *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, India. (2) *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, by Swami Saradananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, India, 1956. (3) *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 17 East 96th Street, New York 28.

⁴³ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1936, p. 75.

⁴⁴ *Bhagavad-Gita*, II, 55-58; VI, 8-9; XII, 13-15.

⁴⁵ "Three eminent *sadhaka-pandits*, well-versed in the Sastras came to the Master during three important periods of his *sadhana*, saw with their own eyes his spiritual states and had the opportunity of having discussions on them. Pandit Padmalochan saw the Master after the latter had attained perfection in the Tantric *sadhanas*. Pandit Vaishnavacharan met him after his success in the Vaishnava *sadhanas*, and Pandit Gauri had the privilege of seeing the Master possessed of the divine splendour produced by *sadhanas* when the latter had finished all his spiritual practices. Pandit Padmalochan saw the Master and said, 'I see in you divine power and manifestation'. Composing a hymn in the Sanskrit language, Vaishnavacharan sang it to the Master in Bhavasamadhi, describing him as an Incarnation of God. Similarly, when he saw the Master, Pandit Gauri said to him, 'I see tangibly realized in you all the high spiritual states recorded in the Sastras read by me. Besides, I see in you the manifestation of such exalted states as are not recorded in them. Your state has far transcended those mentioned in the Vedas, Vedantas and the Sastras. You are not a mortal being. The Reality to which Incarnations owe their origin, is there in you.' When we study the extraordinary story of the Master's life and his wonderful experiences mentioned before, we have a very clear comprehension that those prominent *sadhaka-pandits* did not speak the aforesaid words by way of flattery."

Vide: Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, 1952, p. 305.

⁴⁶ *Vide*: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, 1952, p. 255-256.

⁴⁷ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, India, 1936, p. 251.

⁴⁸ *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, 1952, p. 264.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300.

⁵⁰ *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1942, p. 559.

⁵¹ We have on record Sri Ramakrishna's own statements about his experiments with God and the experiences he had. We are quoting here a part of his findings. He said:

"I had to practise each religion for a time—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity. Furthermore, I followed the paths of the Saktas, Vaishnavas, and Vedantists. I realized that there is only one God toward whom all are travelling; but the paths are different".

Again:

"God made me pass through the discipline of various paths. First according to the Purana,

then according to the Tantra. I also followed the disciplines of the Vedas. At first I practised *sadhana* in the Panchavati. I made a grove of tulsi-plants and used to sit inside it and meditate. Sometimes I cried with a longing heart, 'Mother! Mother!' Or again, 'Rama! Rama!'

"While repeating the name of Rama, I sometimes assumed the attitude of Hanuman and fixed a tail to the lower end of my backbone. I was in a God-intoxicated state. At that time I used to put on a silk robe and worship the Deity. What joy I experienced in that worship!

"I practised the discipline of the Tantra under the bel-tree. At that time I could see no distinction between the sacred tulsi and any other plant. In that state I sometimes ate the leavings from a jackal's meal, food that had been exposed the whole night, part of which might have been eaten by snakes or other creatures. Yes, I ate that stuff.

"Sometimes I rode on a dog and fed him with luchi, also eating part of the bread myself. I realized that the whole world was filled with God alone. One cannot have spiritual realization without destroying ignorance; so I would assume the attitude of a tiger and devour ignorance.

"While practising the disciplines of the Vedas, I became a *sannyasi*. I used to lie down in the *chandni* and say to Hriday: 'I am a *sannyasi*. I shall take my meals here.'

"I vowed to the Divine Mother that I would kill myself if I did not see God. I said to Her: 'O Mother, I am a fool. Please teach me what is contained in the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, and the other scriptures.' The Mother said to me, 'The essence of the Vedanta is that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory.' The Satchidananda Brahman described in the Vedas is the Satchidananda Siva of the Tantra and the Satchidananda Krishna of the Purana. The essence of the Gita is what you get by repeating the word ten times. It is reversed into 'tagi', which indicates renunciation.

"After the realization of God, how far below lie the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Purana, the Tantra! (To Hazra) I cannot utter the word 'Om' in *samadhi*. Why is that? I cannot say 'Om' unless I come down very far from the state of *samadhi*.

"I had all the experiences that one should have, according to the scriptures, after one's direct perception of God. I behaved like a child, like a madman, like a ghoul, and like an inert thing.

"I saw the visions described in the scriptures. Sometimes I saw the universe filled with sparks of fire. Sometimes I saw all the quarters glittering with light, as if the world were a lake of mercury. Sometimes I saw the world as if made of liquid silver. Sometimes, again, I saw all the quarters illumined as if with the light of Roman candles. So you see my experiences tally with those described in the scriptures.

"It was revealed to me further that God Himself has become the universe and all its living

beings and the twenty-four cosmic principles. It is like the process of evolution and involution.

"Oh, what a state God kept me in at that time! One experience would hardly be over before another overcame me. It was like the movement of the husking-machine: no sooner is one end down than the other goes up.

"I would see God in meditation, in the state of samadhi, and I would see the same God when my mind came back to the outer world. When looking at this side of the mirror I would see Him alone, and when looking on the reverse side I saw the same God."

⁵² Empiricism—in the sense of a come-and-see approach—has been one of the most striking features of Indian spiritual tradition from the times of the Vedas to the present day. A study of the three references cited will show how eminently suitable were found a scientific temper and experimental methods for spiritual investigation.

Vide: (1) *Chandogya Upanishad*, VI. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13. (2) *Anguttara Nikaya* (The Book of the Gradual Sayings) Vol. I. Translated by F. L. Woodward, Published for the Pali Text Society by The Oxford University Press, Amen House, Warwick Square, E.C. 4, 1932, pp. 170-75. (3) *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India, 1958, pp. 365-370.

⁵³ *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1942, pp. 625-26.

⁵⁴ Vide: *Srima-darshan* (a Bengali work) by Swami Nityatmananda Part II. General Printers & Publishers Private Limited, 119 Dharmatala Street, Calcutta 13, India, 1st Edition (1370 Bengali Era), p. 43.

⁵⁵ Vide (a) *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, 1952, pp. 175-176. (b) *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, 1936, pp. 88-89. In the latter book, the case is thus recorded:

"At this time Sri Ramakrishna had to undergo an ordeal which Rani Rasmani and Mathur engineered rather thoughtlessly, although in good faith. They were greatly concerned at his failing health and thought that deviation from the rigid observance of continence might be beneficial. They knew that any such proposal would be rejected with scorn. So they contrived to tempt him secretly. Accordingly they hired two women of ill fame to enter his room at Dakshineswar and tempt this child of the Divine Mother. The moment he saw them, with all earnestness he sought the shelter at the feet of the Mother. Hearing the name of the Mother the women were abashed.

"Another day Mathur took Sri Ramakrishna for a drive to Calcutta and stopped at a house in Machuabazar, where several beautiful girls were waiting. He retired leaving Sri Ramakrishna alone with them. Instantly Sri Ramakrishna became like a child, lost outward consciousness in repeating the name of the Mother, and remained in that marvellous state—the very embodiment of purity and self-control. The effect of this on the minds of the girls was electric. They realized their folly, and afraid of the consequences of trying to tempt a saint, they implored his forgiveness. When Mathur, attracted by the noise entered the room, he was struck dumb at this

astonishing proof of Sri Ramakrishna's mastery over his passions, and as he hastened him from the scene, he met with a volley of reproaches from the infuriated agents of his design. He was smitten with shame, and needless to say, his regard for Sri Ramakrishna was redoubled."

⁵⁶ Vide: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1942, p. 1018.

⁵⁷ *Life of Swami Vivekananda, by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1949, p. 67.

⁵⁸ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1936, pp. 348-349.

⁵⁹ Vide: *Reminiscences of Girish Ghosh*, July 25, 1897, recorded in the unpublished Minute Book of the proceedings in sittings of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna in Balam Bose's house in Calcutta from May 1897 to April 1898.

⁶⁰ Vide: *Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*: Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1949, p. 63.

⁶¹ In Vivekananda's biography this extraordinary occurrence is narrated mostly in his own words:

"One day Sri Ramakrishna tried to bring home to him (Narendranath) the identity of the individual soul with Brahman, but without success. Narendra left the room and going to Pratap Chandra Hazra said, 'How can this be? The jug is God, this cup is God and we too are God; nothing can be more preposterous!' Sri Ramakrishna who was in his room in a state of semi-consciousness, hearing Naren's laughter came out with his cloth under his arm like a child. 'Hallo! What are you talking about?' he said smiling, touched Narendra and plunged in Samadhi. The effect of the touch Naren described: 'The magic touch of the Master, that day immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was stupefied to find that really there was nothing in the universe but God! I saw it quite clearly but kept silent, to see if the idea would last. But the impression did not abate in the course of the day. I returned home, but there too everything I saw appeared to be Brahman. I sat down to take my meal, but found that everything—the food, the plate, the person who served and even myself—was nothing but That. I ate a morsel or two and sat still. I was startled by my mother's words, 'Why do you sit still? Finish your meal,'—and began to eat again. But all the while, whether eating or lying down, or going to college, I had the same experience and felt myself always in a sort of comatose state. While walking in streets, I noticed cabs plying, but I did not feel inclined to move out of the way. I felt that the cabs and myself were of one stuff. There was no sensation in my limbs, which I thought were getting paralyzed. I did not relish eating, and felt as if somebody else were eating. Sometimes I lay down during a meal and after a few minutes got up and again began to eat. The result would be that on some days I would take too much, but it did not harm. My mother became alarmed and said that there must be something wrong with me. She was afraid that I might not live long. When the above state altered a little, the world began to appear to me as a dream. While walking in Cornwallis Square, I would strike my head against the iron

railings to see if they were real or only a dream. This state of things continued for some days. When I became normal again I realized that I must have had a glimpse of the Advaita state (state of experiencing identity of the soul with the Supreme spirit). Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth I could not deny the conclusions of Advaita philosophy." *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

⁶²Swami Vivekananda : *Complete Works*, Vol. II, 1963, pp. 64-65.

⁶³*Ibid.*, Vol. I, 1931, p. 119.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. I, 1931, p. 121.

⁶⁵Meister Eckhart (a modern translation) by Ramond Bernard Blakney, Harper & Brothers, Publisher, New York and London, 1941, p. 240.

⁶⁶Vide : *A Report of the A.A.A.S. Committee on Science in Promotion of Human Welfare*, December 31, 1964, pp. 44-45.

MEANING OF PRAYER

SHALINI V. VICHARE

PRAYER is a yearning of the heart. In the ordinary sense prayer means to ask earnestly or to beg. If we take the word prayer in the wider sense, as every kind of communion with the power recognized as divine, then prayer is the soul of religion. The intercourse with God is realized by prayer.

In general prayer consists in a complaint, a cry of anguish, a demand for succour. One can define prayer equally as an uplifting of the soul to God. If prayer is defined as communion with God this might be understood in a way that makes prayer and religion co-extensive.

A prayer may be sung as well as recited and a reading may take the form of collective reading of a psalm which is also a recognized prayer. Formal and regular prayers need to be said heedfully. Short ceremonial prayers can often be solemn and moving and we bow our head or shut our eyes as to induce a devout and attentive frame of mind.

Prayer is addressed directly to God. It is when we know or meet one another in our prayer and prayerful mood that we have the finest relationship with one another, bound together in the union of our bond with God. Prayer is a live communion with God.

Jesus Christ believed in the efficacy of prayer. So also Mohammed. In Buddhism also a strong belief grew that prayer is one of the necessary ingredients of devotion and worship. They used to pray to Buddha whenever they wanted any kind of help. Thus people everywhere believe in the efficacy of

prayers, in the efficacy of conscious and sub-conscious cries from human hearts, and believe that God hears the prayer and fulfils them through His divine grace. When seeking for supernatural help man pours forth his soul with earnestness and sincerity and he bends his knees with the expression of humility and gratitude in order to attract the attention of the Lord.

What we ordinarily call prayer is nothing but the expression of our intense desires. Desires bring their results quickly when they are attended with a strong faith in their fulfilment and that faith is strengthened by the belief that God hears what we say.

Prayer should be like the conversation of a child with its father. There is no need to be eloquent in order to be heard. In judging the value of prayer by its results our most humble words of supplication and praise seem as acceptable to the Master of all beings as the most beautiful invocation. One prays by action. St. Louis of the Gonzague said that the accomplishment of duty is equivalent to prayer. The best way of communion with God is to accomplish His will. The value of prayer is measured by its results. Every prayer, which draws man nearer to God, is good. True prayer represents a mystic state when the consciousness is absorbed in God.

Prayer is not to be performed with the lips alone but with the heart as well. He who prays to God must cleanse his heart. One realizes the sweet music issuing from the very depth of

one's heart when one meditates on the name of God with devotion. There is a famous *Abhanga* of Tukārām where he speaks of himself as the dog of God. When we take the name of God reflexively, unconsciously and automatically we might be called the dogs of God. Tukārām identifies the name of God with the realization of Brahman which is full of eternal bliss. One should utter the name of God in the most distressing as also in the most delightful condition. It is of no importance by what name we invoke God. But the name must be kept like a secret spiritual ember inside our hearts. It is a kind of supersensuous experience. It is seeing without eyes and hearing without ears. Ram, Rahaman, Krishna etc., are all attempts on the part of man to name that unnamable, invisible force which we call God.

Prayer is a confession of one's unworthiness and weakness. It is a reminder to ourselves that we are helpless without His support. It is a call to self-purification, to forward search. In Madame Blavatsky's language, man in praying worships his own glorified self. One, who has the conviction that God is within him, can truly pray. The Divine Mind is unchangeable but that divinity is in everyone. The meaning of prayer is that I want to evoke that divinity within me.

Self-surrender is the highest and the easiest road to success for an aspirant. In the act of self-surrender, it is the self that is surrendered first and along with it the mind, the ego, the intellect and the body are surrendered to God. This being done the seeker begins to feel that it is the Lord who is functioning through his body, mind and speech. He feels that it is God who is doing everything on his behalf. The Lord takes the whole responsibility in respect of such a devotee. The Lord says in the *Gītā*, 'with mind and intellect dedicated to Me, thou shalt doubtless come to Me'. The aspirant looks upon the whole universe as an image of the Lord and all activity as divine sport. The Lord is ever present with such a devotee.

One can pray anywhere but one prays better in solitude. Whatever the place of

prayer, God only speaks to that man who has established calm within himself. Again, it is necessary to pray frequently. 'Think of God more often than you breathe' said Epictetus. All conduct is then inspired by prayer. Thus understood prayer becomes a way of life.

There are different kinds of prayers. The form of prayer which consists in asking God, 'Oh Lord, give me this, give me that', is like a prayer of a beggar to a rich man for food and clothes. When a man, after violating any of the commandments of God, becomes aware of the punishment for violation of the rules, he gets frightened. He then begins to repent and asks God to forgive him. This kind of prayer is like the crying of a criminal before the court of justice for mercy. There is another form of prayer which is a mere expression of gratitude and thanksgiving for what we eat, drink and enjoy in our life. Again, the petitionary form is so fundamental and familiar. . . . We must continue to make supplication to God and we must bring ourselves to the appropriate religious frame of mind and we must be aware that we owe all to God.

According to Vedanta begging for material objects such as prosperity or success or fame is not a true kind of prayer. Thanksgiving also is not a true prayer. True prayer is the mental and verbal expression of the highest spiritual ideal. True prayer is the earnest longing of the heart. It is the soliloquy of the awakened soul. It must always be attended with absolute faith and conviction and concentration. True prayer is but the contemplation of the Divine nature by mentally repeating the ideal in words. It is another form of meditation. The best form of such prayer given by the ancient Vedas is, 'O Soul of our souls; O Light of the Universe, Lead us from unreal to Real; from darkness to Light'.

The condition of efficacious prayer is faith. Faith is a spiritual condition — an intellectual message communicated by God. It is a supernatural virtue inspired and assisted by the grace of God. Faith is the corner-stone of all religions and it is the sheet-anchor of an aspirant. With the thirst, longing, for God

comes real devotion, real Bhakti. Prayer is the very core of man's life as it is the most vital part of religion. The object of prayer is God and the object of religion is also God. So prayer becomes a way towards God-realization.

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EINSTEIN THE GENIUS WHO OPENED THE DOOR TO THE ATOMIC AGE

ON the white walls of the Riverside Church in New York City, figures of 600 great men of all ages are carved into the limestone. One panel is devoted to scientists, 14 of them. The inscription under Albert Einstein says he was 'not only the ablest man of science of his generation, but was also a wise man, which is something different'.

This great German-born American wizard of mathematics and physics changed man's concept of the universe and unlocked the door to the atomic age. He is often called one of the eight immortals of history. As a man of scientific thought, he strode boldly with history's handful : Pythagoras and Archimedes, Copernicus and Newton.

Einstein's work has been described as 'the greatest single stride science has ever made,' and the 30-page paper in which his famous Theory of Relativity was first propounded, as 'the most important document of the century'.

Einstein's only instruments were a pencil and a scribbling pad ; his laboratory was under his cap. Yet he saw farther than a telescope, closer than a microscope. He travelled in lonely splendour to the crossroads of the visible and the invisible, expressing each in terms of the other.

Born on March 14, 1879, in Ulm, Bavaria, Einstein, as a child, used to write poetry. At school he was shy and backward.

After graduation, he settled in Switzerland and got a job as an examiner in the Government Patent Office. During working hours he would scribble his ideas on scraps of paper. In the evenings, while wheeling a baby carriage through the streets, he would halt now and then to jot down rows of mathematical symbols.

Out of those obscure symbols came the most explosive ideas of the century. In 1905, when only 26, he published his jottings in 5 papers. In the fifth, the shortest paper, ('Does the Inertia of a Body Depend on Its Energy Content?'), lay the mathematical nuclei of the atomic age.

Each article was a masterpiece. They included not only his original Theory of Relativity (an essential forerunner of nuclear fission), but also concepts that were to alter our interpretation of light, energy, motion, the quantum theory and the hitherto unexplained photo-electric effect. These epochal papers shocked the scientific world into amazement, admiration and a skepticism that would last for years.

Almost overnight, the Swiss Patent Office clerk became the world's most famous scientist. Universities competed for his services, and in 1912 he became a professor at the famed Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin. In 1915 he expanded his earlier theory into the

General Theory of Relativity. He won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921.

Einstein was happy in Germany under the Weimar Republic. He supported 100 poor families in Berlin, sailed his boat and played the violin. But when Hitler came to power, Einstein was badgered by the Brownshirts and finally driven into exile. After leaving Germany in 1933, he went to France, from where he migrated to Belgium and later to England. The Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, New Jersey (U.S.A.), offered him a lifetime professorship which he accepted. He lived in Princeton till his death in 1955. He became an American citizen in 1940.

A man of singular warmth, he was profoundly interested in human welfare and was literally without concern for money. He spurned several opportunities to become rich. He gave the entire Nobel Prize money to charity.

This man of peace, who had fled from Nazism, was a strong lover of freedom and hated all kinds of human exploitation. He said : 'As long as I have any choice, I will stay only in a country where political liberty, toleration and equality of all citizens before the law is the rule'.

-- (From the USIS Press Feature).

SIKH MYSTICISM

MOHAN SINGH

I

MYSTICISM I define as the total pure awareness of the eternal real and apparent unity, of the seeker with the Sought, worked out as a play with a universal pattern and process, under the guidance of the grace of the Sought. The unity appears processed as a re-union, when there is a simultaneous re-entrance of the seeker into the Sought and the Sought into the seeker, a co-eval, co-extensive, co-operant functioning and achievement of effort and grace, surrender and pull.

By Sikh Mysticism is meant the end and means illustrated in the life and poetry of Nanak Deva, the founder of Sikhism, viz., the Path of Discipleship. Nanak took birth (1469 A.D.) and died (1538 A.D.) in the Panjab, the north-western province of India, having travelled extensively in India itself, and the adjoining lands of Tibet, Iraq and Ceylon. He had nine successors, the last departing behind the Veil in 1708 A.D. All except the sixth, seventh and eighth wrote poetry in the current popular as well as literary style. Barring the tenth Teacher, Guru Gobind Singh, all the poet-successors identified themselves

completely with Nanak, and took over his name as their pen-name, and sang of him as the Brahman-Deva, Parameshvara Himself.

The unity of the life and utterance of the mystic is a major thread of the pattern. Life and utterance illumine, deepen, enrich each other. The most significant 'events' or 'occurrences' (in Whitehead's technical vocabulary) in Nanak's life were in time-sequence ; his marriage ; his disappearance for three days in the waters of the Beyeen stream ; his pretended madness ; his visits to Achal Vatāla, Mecca and Baghdad, where he showed miracles to those whom he wanted them to see ; and his choice of his successor. The community of disciples he organized had its life centred in the person of the teacher, in his utterances, in individual meditation and contemplation and in congregational worship marked by music.

THE MYSTIC GOAL

To the mystic the end provides, rather *is*, the means. Nanak describes his goal thus : 'He is One ; He is Creative Harmony ; He is Truth-Existence-Being-Power ; He is manifest as His Name.

'The Doer, the Dynamic Person-Pervader is He, without Fear, without Enmity.

'Himself Time-less, He is manifest as Form. Unborn is He, the Self being His own Rest and Change.

'The Leader from Darkness to Light is He, and the Lead, too, as Dialectical Grace.'

Four points clearly emerge from this. The Lord is already in us ; He guides us as our teacher to an awareness of His presence within us and without us ; the awareness of our unity or re-union with Him can only follow upon our proper conditioning of ourselves which means we can enter Him, His presence, only if we are creative like Him, fearless and spiteless like Him, stabilized in our deepest, independent Self like Him. The means and the end are inseparable and at every step the means is the end and the end is the means ; re-covery and dis-covery are in this context synonymous. One might say that our goal is achievement by non-effort, growing greatest by becoming the smallest. To define, describe, praise the Beloved is to know Him and to know Him is to love Him, depend upon Him more and more, and to love and depend upon Him is to enter into His presence, where we fulfil ourselves, consummate ourselves.

THE MYSTIC ATTITUDE

The Goal is Infinite ; It can be reached by infinite paths. What path shall we choose ? That which suits our state of mind. Nanak chose to play the wife, one of the many wives of the One Husband-Lord. This royal *Harem* conception harks back to the Rig-Veda, wherein it is said : 'We wait for you, O Prime-Mover, First and Best Knower, the Most Excellent Achiever, Thou Fire, Light, Heat, Passion, Knowledge, Status (=Agni), as wives wait eagerly for their royal husband, their mighty Master (=Indra).' All the Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian words for the husband were appropriated by Nanak : *Swāmi*, *Pati*, *Puruṣa*, *Bharta*, *Kānta*, *Shauhar*, *Khāwañd*, *Mālik*, *Khasm*. The entire mystic culture consists of the implications of this wifely attitude, some of which are as follows. I am

already united to Him by this intimate, sacred, rich indissoluble tie. I have been provided by Him with a room, board, furniture, beautiful surroundings, co-wives for company, and servants. I have only to wait patiently for His call, to deck myself, to keep the bed clean and decorated, to remember Him and Him alone, to think out the qualities He likes in a wife and to acquire them ; in short, to equip myself mentally and physically, so that I may soon deserve His attention, His early visit into my room, into my heart. I have to picture to myself that meeting during which I shall be taken into His embrace, consummated, absorbed, made the greatest and happiest and most-knowing in the ecstasy of union. May I be found deserving by Him. Every moment I must watch myself for He is ever-present, and no moment of mine passes but in His eye.

'He is the Sea and I am the fish ; He is the cloud and I am the *Chatrik* bird ; He is the Moon and I am the *Chakor* bird ; He is the light and I am the moth . . .'

The emphasis is on psychological self-transformation ; mentally the wife, to deserve well of her husband, must 'imitate' Him, must dye herself in His hues, and so completely fill herself with His Names—Attributes, as not to leave any room for self or the world. The wife must not harbour any thoughts and feelings of jealousy ; she should constantly bear in her mind that it is not for her to question the doings of her Lord and Master, Who is well-known both for His indifference and for His kindness ; whatever He does, cannot but be for the good of His wives, who must not commit an act of disloyalty even in a dream. Let the wife keep watch all the twenty-four hours.

JOYS OF UNION

The tie of union is already there to give us joy ; that joy has to be supplemented during the period of waiting by constant remembrance of Him, by converse about Him with co-wives, by wonder-charged admiration of His beauteous creation, by analytic and synthetic reflection and meditation on His

countless attributes. When the complete re-union, the mystic goal, is achieved, then the boundless joy that accrues is the pure joyous awareness of nothing else but His Presence. *Ānanda* and *Sukha* are words that occur again and again, a thousand times, in the pages of the Sikh Holy Scripture called the *Guru Granth Sāhib Jī*. The titles of the two most significant and longest poems of the second and fourth successors of Nanak are *Ānand* (Bliss) and *Sukhmani* (The Crest-Jewel of Bliss). The disciple is enjoined to use the word *Ānanda* in preference to any other word for peace and satisfaction, like *Sānti*, *Khushī*, *Ārām*, and try to feel as if *Ānanda* is already his even while he is being hauled on the cross of cruelty or the wheel of injustice.

Every Sikh is enjoined to be a mystic and all Sikh religious experience is mystical, whether it is recitation (*Japa*), or community singing (*Kīrtana*) or fighting on the battlefield (*Dharma Yuddha*), or earning his daily bread (*Kamāi*). And this identity between life and religion, between religion and mysticism, is achieved through a careful cultivation of this most intimate and all-comprehensive attitude of a wife who belongs to Him, the Lord, the Master, in flesh as much as in mind and spirit. The wife lives for her Lord, lives ever in His eye and for His glory, at peace, in peace with all other co-wives. Whether the Lord visits me or not, I am with Him — in His palace — and He is with me; I have no cause for complaint. What has He not given me to fill me with wonder! And as to the evil and suffering that befall me, are they not ordered for me by my Master, my Love, who knows the end before the start? Would He care for a wife who is ugly, weak, plaintive, unheroic, jealous or envious, impure in word and deed, ambitious, bitter of tongue, carping? Do we not know that sweetness, humility, modesty, purity, truthfulness, complete surrender, gratefulness are the cardinal virtues indispensable to a wife? The Lord cares not for outer beauty, formal politeness, intellectual cleverness, book-learning. He does not even need our service. He wants our full virgin patient unswerving love and that love we can and

must render back unto Him, for, on His part He has given that love to us though we are not aware of it yet. When after re-union we look at ourselves what do we find? Things are even more beautiful than we thought; life is richer and more meaningful; evil and suffering are only our failure to react properly, detachedly, spiritually to physical and mental happenings; love is the law of life, it is its own truth and reality and power; we have never been separated from Him, our Lord, only we thought so in our ignorance engendered in us by His playfulness. The greatest joy of our re-union with Him is our reconciliation with all that previously inspired fear in us or provoked our enmity. No dualities, no antinomies, no tensions, no conflicts.

MYSTIC PRACTICES

Nanak accepts the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm; he accepts the Personal Absolute; he accepts the *Ātman*; and there he stops. The only practice he enjoins is the practice of constant watchfulness of one's step, mental and physical, lest one may behave as if there was no God, and as if our self was not wedded to the one Lord, the one Master. If the goal is total awareness of unity and our union with that One, then the path is to decrease our disunity-engendering awareness of time-space-cause and increase our awareness of Him in every act of ours on any and every plane. Nanak sums up his method by saying, 'As I remember Thee, I am; I am dead the moment I lose awareness of Thee. . . . The longing for awareness of Thee is a whole-man hunger; this hunger is fed on cheerful suffering of every evil and pain.' The only two psychological methods of stilling the undesirable thoughts or mentations of the mind, clearly indicated by the Founder of Sikhism, are: 'Read the word of the teacher again and again, and think over it; try to reverse the life-process as the fish does'.

THE COMMONSENSE APPROACH

Nanak's mystic approach is the commonsense approach. God is everywhere. He is everything. We are His Names and Forms,

hiding Him, revealing Him. We have to reveal Him more and more — if He so chooses, or to conceal Him more and more, if it so pleases Him. To His select ones He gives ever-increasing awareness of Himself. To be one of His select all one can do, is to adopt the attitude (by His order) of the waiting wife, who has nothing to do but to make herself purer and more earnest. She has to reverse the normal human attitude of a wife, that is, the more she is rejected, the more heroic should her love prove itself to be; the more she is ignored, the more deserving should she try to make herself in body and mind. If her Lord does not need her service let her serve the minions of her Lord, His other wives, His non-human creatures. If she cannot see the Lord in His own Light-Form, let her try to see Him in His handiworks; let her rejoicingly hear His footfalls as He goes into the apartments of others. If the Lord is indifferent let her feel that that indifference is a glorious, sublime attribute of Him.

By discarding all efforts to please the Lord and throwing herself at His feet, the wife does more to deserve well of Him than by any one method of pleasing Him. There is nothing secret about this method, and it is just the ordinary commonsense approach, mainly psychological. No philosophizing about the content of the absolute or the relative; no logic-chopping, no methodology, no comparative valuations of love, wisdom, creative activity. Although the compound *prem-bhagat* (*premā-bhakti*) is used by Nanak and his successors for their type of mysticism, yet I should hesitate to call it love-mysticism or devotional-mysticism. And mainly for two reasons. With Nanak mysticism, philosophy and religion are one and the same thing; secondly with him, love, knowledge and creative activity are but three synonyms, all denoting the pull His grace exerts on us. By love He lets us be drawn towards Him; by wisdom He lets Himself be seen by us; by creativity He lets Himself be aped by us. These three are related to going, seeing, knowing, acting: the functions of feet, eyes, hands. Are not all the organs, actions and

perceptions in the charge of the one mind (*antahkaraṇa*), and is not action, emotion, perception, conception, concentration one single process?

THE MYSTIC VISIONS

Nanak describes his mystic visions in a very simple, clear, convincing manner in similes and metaphors, which are as intimately known to us as the husband-wife relationship. There is nothing mystifying about them. Every normal state of man is capable of being transformed into a mystic state, yielding a mystic vision, provided we add to that state the awareness of the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient One. Everything here is sacred and blessed, real and valuable, joy-giving and wisdom-producing, to him who like Nanak has learnt to spell God not as G, O, D, but as Thine. And thereby hangs a tale. The first vision Nanak had of the Lord came about this wise. (In this as in the other three cases he lifted poetic metaphors into living metaphors; he acted the metaphor; he traced the metaphor in flesh and blood; he became the metaphor.)

He was a storeman in the employ of Daulat Khan Lodhi at Sultanpur, then capital of East Panjab. One day he was weighing out corn to people, as gift. The work was so mechanical that Nanak could only keep his spiritual balance by escaping into contemplation on the Lord, who doled out everything to His creation in the measure He thought fit. Nanak had counted out twelve weights. He arrived at the thirteenth, which in Panjabi language is *terā*. Now this word not only means thirteenth but also Thine. He so lost himself in the music of Thine that while he went on weighing, he only repeated *Terā* as if it was only the thirteenth and not the umpteenth measure. This was the first indication of Nanak's mergence in the Lord, his union with Him.

The next vision he had was a few miles off Jullundur. Nanak went to bathe in the stream. He entered the waters, and did not come out for three days. He had been called for an audience with the Lord. When he

returned, he was half-mad to his friends and associates, for he would utter nothing but, "No Hindu, no Musalman, all are the vestibules of the Lord, all are the denizens of the Lord's palace."

In the third vision Nanak saw the whole creation in the form of a flock of pigeons being fed by the Lord, who made no distinction between good and bad, deserving and not-deserving, but was busy enjoying the sight and the act.

The fourth vision was one in which Nanak saw daily for over a month a most charming, richly-ornamented lady enter his room and sweep it clean and leave. She was *Māyā* or *Sakti* herself, come to serve the devotee of the Lord.

The mystic's life is full of living metaphors.

MYSTICISM AS A SOCIAL TRANSFORMER

The individual represents a society, better integrated than society itself; intellect, mind, senses, organs, all serve the spirit, all are the wives of the spirit for does not one of the Upaniṣads call intellect (*buddhi*) the wife of the spirit (*Jīvātma*)? When every individual is treated by another tolerantly, nay, joyously, co-operatively, without jealousy or envy, it becomes an ideal social order, wherein all have a common objective, all keep their places, and adopt the same means, being cared for equally by the Lord, the Master, according to their merits in His eye. The Master is the thread of love that strings all, who must join as a community to sing His praises and glories. The mystic must, as a member of the household of the Lord, pull his weight with the others and contribute to their well-being effectively by honest, serviceful living. The teacher and the disciple are one; the king and the beggar are one; it is a truly religious-mystic act to manifest the love of the Lord in charity and service to fellow-creatures. Only a mystic can get the full value of life through universal service, through faith in all life, all forms of it. First-rate ethical conduct flows naturally from every dedicated spouse of the Lord.

At least one Christian author has caught the truth of Sikh mysticism and ethics, and voiced it frankly. In his "*The Comparative Study of Religions*", Prof. A. G. Widgery has said:

"The Sikh religion is a simple faith of the love of God. By comparison with this dominating devotion all else is almost insignificant. This love while it includes an emotional attitude of submission to God brings also a distinct joyousness. 'He who banisheth worldly love shall dance day and night in God's house and never sleep.' 'He who is dyed with God's love singeth His praises night and day and is invited to His palace.' 'To serve God is to love Him, if pious men reflect on it.' 'Until one loves the Lord all other love is unstable.' The joyousness of the Sikh includes the enjoyment of what God gives in this world. Here is the strength of dependence on God and as a result not mere peace, but an ecstasy of the happiness of the lover-beloved. Such an experience can tolerate little of the formalism of ceremonial ritual, but it leads to an eradication of evil and the cultivation of good feelings to others. Thus the Sikh religion has taught a very lofty moral code, which will recognise no artificial distinctions of men, but respects righteousness unsullied by pride."

THE LORD AND HIS PALACE

The two most mystical poems of Nanak relate to the *Form of the Lord*, the *Palace of the Lord*, and *Nature's Adoration of the Lord*. I have already pointed to Nanak's acceptance of the Lord as Person (*Puruṣa*, entity). This is again a very commonsense view. As long as man imagines himself as a spouse gifted with eyes of the body and eyes of the mind, to him the Lord can be and is the Person. Beyond that, the subject-object, knower-known relation cannot go. Only the transcendent can see, know the transcendent. To make his exposition clear and unequivocal, Nanak always adds *Puruṣa* (Person) to every attribute used for the Lord: *Karta Purakh*, *Akal Purakh*, *Achyuta Purakh*. We persons are, in the image of That *Puruṣa* (Person). This

word *Puruṣa* is not mere person ; it yields to us the pattern-process of unity we seek at His level, from His angle. *Puruṣa* is He who creates the bodies or extensions-intensions, and enters into them, dwells in them, consummating them at His will.

Nanak's word for palace is the Arabic word *Mahal* which means a King's palace as well as his *harem*. Later *Mahal* came to mean the spouse living in the royal palace, and under the Moghuls in India the wives in the *harem* began to have *mahal* as the end part of their names, e.g., Mumtaz Mahal for whom the Taj at Agra was built by Emperor Shah Jahan (d. 1658 A.D.). Guru Arjan Deva, fourth successor of Nanak, who died in 1606 A.D., used the word *mahalla* as equivalent for *mahal*, meaning the spouse of the Lord, the founder of the Sikh religion being *mahalla I*, and so on. Now the use of this word was also intended to convey the sense of unity and order in the creation.

In the nature poem, all nature is shown as adoring the Lord. The object is to show how all nature is one, not in the Lord, but to the Lord, before the Lord, in the presence of the Lord. We should mark this difference of Nanak's outlook from that of other mystics. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Arjuna is shown the Form of the Lord, in which the entire cosmos is one ; but just before that, before he got from the Lord the Divine sight, he had seen the whole creation as one in the presence of the Lord, engaged in singing His praises and crying, 'All Hail'. Nanak in both his poems, on *Nature's Adoration of the Lord*, and on the *Palace of the Lord*, describes man and nature as a unity and lets us see the united, blent, music and light, that issue from man-cum-nature, and from all nature.

Thus the two poems are intended to give to us that vision of unity which the mystic Nanak had attained by the Lord's grace. The Form of the Lord as painted by Nanak is the form of man except that the Lord has thousands of eyes and is yet without physical eyes, has thousands of feet and is yet without physical feet. This is again a commonsense view. As the Lord, though a Person, is yet

the Absolute, similarly though with Form, the Lord is unborn and unlimited by limbs. Man can have all the joy and wonder and wisdom, which he needs and which he can grasp, with the image of such a normal-abnormal figure before him ; to imagine the Lord as the absolute impersonal is not possible for man *qua* man. There may be greater transcendent heights and depths, and deeper and wider joys for man, but for Nanak these visions of the unity of Man and Nature and the Lord are enough. He wants to go thus far and no further. The mergence of man in God is the result, not of man's desire or effort, but a miracle, a consummation of His grace, to report which man returns not. The self-forgetfulness, the self-discovery, the self-enjoyment, which accrue to the Sikh mystic from a sight of the palace of the Lord, where all nature is seen as one, are sufficient inspiration for the rest of his life ; he returns from that visit, provided with such stores of light, love, magnetism, truth, beauty, power, as he can freely distribute among men and women and children and animals and birds without the stores becoming exhausted. The mystic has achieved his goal only when he has returned from the union, blessed with a new, divinized, holified relationship with the cosmos, a life amidst which will only then yield to him the greatest Joy. One may say therefore that the goal of the Sikh mystic is not a vision of unity, a feeling of identity with God, but the joy of unitive life on this very earth for the full term allowed to man. The mystic therefore is more than an enfranchizer of his individual self, more than a social benefactor ; he is really and truly and effectively, a Cosmic Force, that works on the cosmic scale with its cosmic consciousness. God is never idle ; so men of God blessed with Divine awareness return from the palace of the Lord to dispense hope, faith and charity to all created beings, not confining their message of cheer to the good alone, to men and women of a particular race, time or clime. Indeed, the mystic's scope and mission is vaster than a prophet's, for while the prophet gives laws of good, the politician-economist supplies

goods, the mystic freely weighs out jealousy- and full imitation of the Lord, the Lover, the less love to all and sundry in a madness, Husband; Nanak achieved this and felt con- without counting the cost or the numbers, and summated. uttering *tera, tera, tera, tera*. This is true

(to be continued)

PARAMĀRTHASĀRA—(Continued from page 178)

in the image etc., though a super-imposition is accepted as the means to the knowledge of reality. Therefore there is no fault whatsoever in inferring the illusoriness of the universe. On the other hand, if bondage is accepted as real there will arise the contingency of non-liberation.

Q.: Well, does not the Self become the object of the ego, the notion of 'I'?

A.: No. That cognition is due to the Self being in relation with the limiting adjunct of intellect, which is not real. For the Self by itself is not an object of cognition of the ego. The Self itself by the impact of its light of consciousness (*citprakāśa*) makes the intellect etc., feel as 'I am happy', 'I am miserable' and so on.

Q.: Even the Self becomes the object of cognition of the scriptures? Otherwise the scriptures will have no meaning.

A.: This has already been answered. The scriptures only destroy the ignorance about the Self and not in any way make the Self known—the Self being self-revealing. Scripture itself supports this contention when it says: 'The unseen can never be seen'. (अदृश्यो न हि दृश्यते) Therefore it is concluded that the Conscious Principle covered with the products of Prakṛti transmigrates. This, its migratory existence, being due to Māyā is illusory and its nature has been explained here.

यद्वद्दिनकर एको विभाति सलिलाशयेषु सर्वेषु । तद्वत् सकलोपाधिष्ववस्थितो भाति

परमात्मा ॥ २३ ॥

23. Just as the one orb of the sun, reflected in all the sheets of water, shines as many, so does the one Paramatman appears, as present in all limiting adjuncts, (as many).

cf. the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, 6-11.

खमिव घटादिष्वन्तर्बहिः स्थितं ब्रह्म सर्वपिण्डेषु । देहेऽहमित्यनात्मनि बुद्धिः संसारबन्धाय ॥ २४ ॥

24. Brahman is present in all bodies and also outside of them as the ether is present inside and outside the pot. Therefore the notion of 'I' towards the body, which is the non-self, makes for bondage in the migratory existence.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

Swami Lokeswarananda is the head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, West Bengal. Romain Rolland as a literary figure is not unknown to the Indian public. His lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda did a great service in helping to remove the cobwebs of prejudice, the Western mind had towards Indian religion and philosophy, at least to some extent. But, perhaps, little is known of the author of these works himself. Swami Lokeswarananda has in a brief survey given us the ideas and ideals of Romain Rolland and the struggles he underwent in honest pursuit of those ideals.

"Can One be Scientific and Yet Spiritual?" by Swami Budhananda is the third and concluding instalment of the serial. The other two instalments appeared in our June and July 1966 numbers.

Srimati Shalini V. Vichare from Nagpur is a new contributor to the *Vedanta Kesari*.

The article on Einstein is taken from the write-up that appeared in the USIS news sheets some time ago.

Dr. Mohan Singh is from Chandigarh, Panjab. His article "Sikh Mysticism" being a lengthy one will be published in instalments.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI AND SARVODAYA: By Dr V. P. Varma. Published by Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Educational publishers, Agra. Pp. 468. Price Rs. 14.

This is a most valuable addition to Gandhian literature, being a comprehensive exposition of Mahatma's political philosophy, or to be more accurate, his politics and his philosophy. For in truth, to Gandhiji, philosophy could not be divorced from politics, anymore than they could be dissociated from ethics and morality. It could indeed be very well said of him that he was essentially a man of religion who strode the political stage betimes. As the author rightly points out and proves with a wealth of details, he was more akin to Socrates and Buddha, than to some of the political thinkers of the West. Naturally enough, his concept of law and of sovereignty differed from the theories propounded by them. He would not countenance the sovereignty of the state, if it meant its absolute, uncontrolled, and illimitable power (P. 278).

Gandhiji's views on the various economic problems which beset any country, could not be dismissed as chimerical; but as the author points out (P. 332) they even now offer the only means

for averting misery and penury. In fact they were an improvement on the ideas of socialism and communism. A very competent line of distinction has been drawn between Leninism and Gandhism (P. 332).

The author rightly characterises Gandhian theories in the social, economic and political fields, as open, synthetic, comprehensive and elastic. They have sprung from his "wonderful resilience of mind" (P. 341). His philosophy had its basic roots in the Bible and the Gita and had been tempered by his own intuitions and spiritual perceptions (P. 341). If it was not wholly complete it was only because no finite mind could create an eternally perfect system (P. 411).

European political thinkers harped upon the theory of the survival of the fittest, but Gandhiji stressed on the ultimate victory of truth (P. 342). His political philosophy reasserted Vedantic, Buddhistic and Stoic Christian beliefs and gave new value and significance to old truths (P. 342). His life was his testament, and he strove by his own sadhana, tapasya and individual sufferings to spotlight humility, truthfulness, meekness and love (P. 410, P. 455).

The author has really succeeded in building up a cogent system of Gandhiji's philosophy which

is compact and self-contained, possessing an eternal value. The Mahatma did not work for his country alone: nor did he stop with obtaining Swaraj for his countrymen. His gospel is of perennial worth.

A study of this extremely well-written and well-documented compilation, opens up new vistas of thought and new fields of research which will have to be undertaken by historians and academicians for many a year to come. One agrees with the author that they should not be reserved for being rehearsed on festive occasions and then forgotten.

S. RAJAGOPALAN

A SHORT LIFE OF NICOLAI SCHEIRMAN: By Dr V. V. Athalye, Saraswati Sadan, Satara, Maharashtra, India. Pp. 92. Price Rs. 5.

This is an exceedingly interesting biography of one whom the author has rightly styled as a liaison saint between the East and West, a Russian born Mystic who "belongs to the class of martyrs marching towards the temple of righteousness" and who have sprung up as a result of the popularisation of the lives of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in the West. The subject, Nicolai Scheirman was essentially a product of the post-Russian Revolution era, but the unexpected had happened in his life which verily had proved a starting point. He had been greatly influenced by the technique of Hindu mysticism and spiritual discipline, having been nourished on the Gita and Vivekananda's Jnana Yoga (P. 63). He had accepted the principles of Advaitism and of Maya; and his has been a life of Vairagya "with a passionate love for all living beings" (P. 85).

The book deserves to be read by one and all.

S. RAJAGOPALAN

THE MEANING OF SELF-RELIANCE: Pp. 112. Price Re. 1.00. Publications Division, Ministry of Information, Delhi-6.

This is a reprint of the articles written by the late Prime Minister and the other high functionaries, about the endeavours made by the several sectors in this country towards attaining self-sufficiency in the various economic spheres, ranging from agriculture to armament. The immediate context was however the national emergency in the wake of Pakistan's war-mongering, but the studies made in this brochure must convince anyone of the vast potentialities that are available in our land and of the skilful use to which many have been put in recent years, rendering self-sufficiency not an unattainable ideal.

S. RAJAGOPALAN.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF PLANNING: Pp. 63. Price: Re. 1.00. Publications Division, Ministry of Information, Government of India, Delhi-6.

This pamphlet recounts the various achievements which a planned economy had made in recent years, and the record is certainly very impressive, buttressed as it has been by the illustrations depicting the gigantic attainments in some directions. It throws a flood of light on the performances of our scientists, engineers and planners, of which, it must be confessed, so little is known to the man in the street.

S. RAJAGOPALAN.

MAHATMA GANDHI: The Last Phase. Vol. I. Book One. Pp. 368. Price: Rs. 10. Vol. I. Book Two. Pp. 375. Price: Rs. 10. By Pyarelal. Pub.: Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-14.

These two volumes relate the story of the Mahatma from the time he was released from prison in 1944 upto his pacification mission in Bihar which terminated in May 1947. It is a story in the main of his "do or die" mission in Noakhali and in Bihar, in which, as Babu Rajendra Prasad has so aptly said in his introduction, all the experiments he had carried out throughout his career were put to their severest and final test. Gandhiji had been an avowed votary of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, and it was his guide book during his fast (p. 100). He radiated love, sympathy and mellowed wisdom to the tallest and the least: even hardy businessmen became nationalistic to the core. People went to him as a standard compass to set their courses by (110). He sent forth winged words, charged with courage which knows no fear (112).

His life was an indivisible whole: all his activities ran into one another, having their common root in his passion for truth. This was evident by the way he had handled the British Cabinet Mission's negotiations (186). His clarity of thinking, mastery of details and "unerring hunch" aroused the envy and admiration of seasoned diplomats and statesmen (188). "His Satyagraha was really an amplification of the concept of God as Sat-chit-ananda, grounded on the belief that anyone who bears Him in his heart has a marvellous force like steam or electricity, but much more subtle" (322). It imports certain disciplines like truth, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession, fearlessness, control of the palate and Brahmacharya (325). He had converted himself and his co-workers into tools of research in his spiritual laboratory, and developed an extraordinary psychic sensitivity to the slightest variation in the moral atmosphere around him (113).

His Noakhali mission was in itself a challenge to his dictum that peace could flourish when truth and non-violence reigned supreme. But it was his crowning achievement that he had been able to establish peace and goodwill at that very place. It was always a pleasure and inspiration, so Jawaharlal Nehru had recorded, to meet this young man of 77: "one felt a little younger and stronger after meeting him" (128).

Gandhiji's asceticism was neither sour nor cramping nor fanatical. It was a means of service, joyous and joy-giving (153).

Gandhiji's views on Brahmacharya (p. 209 to 244) which at one time roused a storm of controversy, have been set out in full and the reader is enabled to discover the rationale behind a much criticised action of his. His whole life had been built upon that issue, but his approach had not been that of the orthodox moralist, but that of a scientific searcher after truth. The apathy and misunderstanding which arose even amongst his devoted colleagues did not unnerve him because ultimately he came to rely more and more on the power of Ramanama with all its implications (241): that meant, uttermost detachment — indifference to praise and blame (*ibid*).

Gandhiji was less a politician than a mystic. He was an Advaitin by conviction, but he set much store by Ramanam. His illustrious biographer has most graphically described (pp. 164 to 166) how he had made a gospel out of it. "Constant repetition of a word-symbol connoting the Ultimate Reality with concentration results in the Fact for which the word stands presenting itself to the soul" (164). To Gandhiji that word was Rama Nama. To him, it was not a charm or magical formula. His own experience was that it charmed away every evil thought and made for internal purity. Gandhiji's Rama was not the historical personage, but the eternal ruler, unborn, timeless, formless and stainless (165). The name does not indicate individuality but attributes. His own experience was that when one had attained a complete and living faith in the Unseen Power, the body underwent internal transformation and became free from all ailments. Ramanama, he advised, should continue even with one's last breath and that not mechanically, but with one's whole being. He cited the example of Hanuman whose body had become unassailable as a rock as a result of his complete self-dedication to Rama (p. 168).

S. RAJAGOPALAN.

THE TRAINING OF THE ZEN BUDDHIST MONK: By Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Pp. 161. Price: \$ 6.00. University Books, New Hyde Park, New York.

This exceedingly well brought out publication, sets out in full the training of the "Zen monk". Zen is the Japanese word for "Dhyana" and is a discipline rather than a philosophy or cult. Wedded to Buddhism, it is a form of mysticism, which is practised even to this day not only by monks but even by businessmen and statesmen in Japan. It is interesting to be told that it was established in China by a high dignitary from South India in 520 A.D. In due time Zen became equated with "Prajna" which in turn led to the doctrine of Sunyata, a state corresponding to 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi' — which is "expressible only in terms of contradiction" and which is one for individual experience. The Zen life heightens spiritual development at the same time it turns out good citizens (p. 4). Its votaries are taught humility, and are to look forward to a "life of labour, service, of prayer and gratitude and of meditation". The "desire to possess" must be stifled, for every one must know that his final destination is a hole not more than three feet square" (8). To the Zenda monk, "a day of no work is a day of no eating". He was employed in all kinds of manual labour and was even good at wrestling (38). Eating was a solemn affair, though necessarily very frugal (50). This applies to every other daily routine and it is claimed that those who have graduated from the Zendo life are the most thoroughly equipped members of society (53). Any work, however offensive or repulsive is willingly undertaken (60).

Asceticism, to the Zen, is not negativistic: what he aims at is to reduce the claims of the body to a minimum in order to divert their course to a higher realm of activities (94). Meditation can be practised only under certain conditions of bodily postures (104). There is a striking similarity to the one advocated by the Lord in the Gita.

Though an invaluable exposition of the tenets of an important school of Buddhist philosophy, this book needs to be read by votaries of all religions as an eminently helpful handbook for spiritual life and endeavour; and aspirants for Vana Prastha and Sannyasa Ashramas, may actually find it an indispensable companion.

S. RAJAGOPALAN.

NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH, MADRAS

Swami Ramakrishnanandaji's Birthday

Swami Ramakrishnanandaji's Birthday was observed at Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras on Saturday the 16th July 1966. The celebrations began with Mangalarti in the shrine, followed by devotional songs and Vedic chanting; Chandi, Gita and Vishnu Sahasranama were also chanted on the occasion. Special Puja which began at 7-30 a.m., continued upto 12-30 p.m. 800 devotees were given *prasad* in hand.

The public celebration came off on Sunday the 17th July 1966. It began with *Katha Kalakshepam* by Brahmasri T. S. Balakrishna Sastrigal on Tyaga Brahma at 4 p.m. at the Vivekananda Hall and concluded at 5-30 p.m.

The meeting began at 5-45 p.m. with opening songs. Swami Kailasananda welcomed the speakers, the president of the meeting and the audience.

Sri "Anna", N. Subramania Iyer, Secretary, Vivekananda College spoke on the life of Swami Ramakrishnananda in Tamil.

His speech was followed by one in English by Swami Tapasyananda, head of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trivandrum. The Swami pointed out that the way of worship of Swami Ramakrishnananda was unique not only in its peculiarity but more so because of it being performed in that way by a highly intellectual person, whose pastime was mathematical problems. 'Swami Ramakrishnananda', the speaker continued, 'must have all along been in a high state of ecstasy where he could see the Master living. That is the only explanation that we could give of such a highly sentimental attitude of a person who was, in his thinking so precise, scientific and mathematical — as we find him in his writings.' 'This state,' the speaker said, 'could be compared to the experience of the unlettered and innocent lady, "Gopal's Mother", a disciple of the Master.'

Sri K. Balasubramania Aiyar in his presidential remarks recollected some of his reminiscences of Swami Ramakrishnananda.

Sri G. Venkataraman, Principal, Vivekananda College, Madras, proposed a vote of thanks with which the meeting came to a close at 7-40 p.m.

Thereafter there was Bhajan, led by Swami Priyananda, for about an hour in the Math Hall.

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA
P.O. NARENDRAPUR, 24 PARGANAS, W.B.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

All India Essay Competition — 1967.

Under the auspices of the Institute of Social Education and Recreation, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, P.O. Narendrapur, 24-Parganas, West Bengal, an Essay Competition will be held on the various aspects of Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings. The competition is open to the students of Schools, Colleges and Universities (including Research Students) and School teachers.

The subjects selected for the different groups of competitors and the requisite rules and conditions are as follows:—

Group — I. (For students in Class VIII and below): Subject — "India is proud of Swami Vivekananda", Language — English, Bengali or Hindi. The essay should not exceed 1,500 words.

Group — II. (For students in Classes IX, X and XI): Subject — "Swami Vivekananda — a friend of the common man". Language — English, Bengali, Hindi, Oriya, Tamil or Telugu. The essay should not exceed 2,000 words.

Group — III. (For College Students): "The ideal society that Swami Vivekananda wanted to create". Language — English, Bengali, Tamil or Hindi. The essay should not exceed 2,500 words.

Group — IV. (For Post-graduate and Research Students): Subject — "The Vedantic approach in contrast to the communistic approach to the problem of Indian regeneration". Language — English, Bengali or Hindi. The essay should not exceed 3,000 words.

Group — V. (For School Teachers): Subject — "The image of an Indian teacher in the light of Swamiji's thoughts". Language — English, Bengali or Hindi. The essay should not exceed 3,000 words.

The Essay submitted must be in the competitor's own hand-writing. The competitor must not write his/her name on the script but shall attach a separate slip of paper to the script giving therein (in block letters) his/her name, address and particulars of the Institution to which he/she belongs, duly certified by the Head of the Institution under the Seal of his/her Office. The first page of the essay should also bear, at its top, dated signature of the Head of the Institution with Seal of the Office. *The essay should reach the Institute on or before the 1st September, 1966.* The competitor, if he so desires, may retain a copy of the essay submitted, as the original copy will not be returned in any circumstances.

Suitable prizes will be awarded to those adjudged First, Second and Third in each group of competitors. The result will be communicated to the institutions concerned by early next year. Competitors need not address us in the matter.

For further particulars reference may be made to the Director of the Institute.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, MYSORE-2.

Report of the Summer Retreat 1966

A Summer Retreat, mainly for college students, was arranged by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore at its Vidyashala, a residential high school, campus from 1st to 15th May 1966.

One hundred and twenty six students were selected out of 246 applications received. But finally only eighty six candidates were able to join the Retreat, of whom again five left for various reasons. 81 pupils attended the retreat in full.

The main objectives of the retreat were: (1) To make young men study themselves through questioning and reflection, (2) to supplement their school and college education by an understanding of the fundamental spiritual principles that have formed the basis of Indian culture; (3) to impart a basic knowledge of our scriptures like the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita etc.; (4) to develop among the youth a respect for all religions and religious leaders and (5) to impart some practical disciplines that may be followed up afterwards as a daily practice.

The boys were supplied with a set of books which could be used as text books and also for reference.

A routine was maintained in which the day started at 5 a.m. and ended at 10 p.m. Three classes were daily held on different subjects (all regarding the fundamentals of religion). There were prayers both morning and evening. Two study periods, one in the morning and one in the

evening sessions, were kept up. There were games for an hour in the evening and a break of two hours for rest from noon to 2 p.m.

Teaching of devotional songs and hymns was also included in the daily programme. Strict discipline, for which special rules were framed, was maintained throughout the term of the Retreat.

Some excursions were also arranged. Tests were arranged and valuation of the papers was done by the various teachers who dealt with the particular subject.

THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, U.S.A.

SHORT REPORT APRIL 1965 THROUGH MARCH 1966

Swami Satprakashananda who is in-Charge of the Center, conducted regular services in the Society's chapel on Sunday mornings except during ten weeks of the hot season. He dealt with different religious and philosophical topics. The services were open to the public. Students of Comparative Religion of different colleges and churches, were among the audience. Total number of lectures were 42.

Every Tuesday evening the Swami conducted a meditation and gave a discourse on a Hindu scripture. During the year "The Bhagavad-Gita" and "Narada's Aphorisms on Divine Love" were taken up. Students and members of different religious and educational centers also attended the meetings.

Throughout the year the chapel was open for silent meditation on all weekdays from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. Every day some devotees came.

During the summer recess, while the usual services were suspended, the Vedanta students met regularly every Sunday morning and Tuesday evening for prayer, meditation, and for hearing the Swami's tape-recorded lectures.

The birthdays of Sri Krishna, The Buddha, Sankaracharya, Sri Ramakrishna, The Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Brahmananda were observed with devotional worship in the shrine. On each occasion a special service was conducted in the chapel on the following Sunday. On Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary a Hindu dinner was served. Refreshments were served on all other occasions. On Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary a documentary sound film on his life and message prepared by the Government of India was shown. Other festivals such as Good Friday, the worship of the Divine Mother Durga, and Christmas Eve were also observed each with a special service in the chapel.

The Swami expounded the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna at an informal meeting of members and friends, held in the library once a month.

Two additional meetings were held in the Society's chapel; one for the senior High School students of the Episcopal Church of St. Charles and the other for the Post Collegians of Ladue Chapel, a Presbyterian Church.

The Swami was invited to function as moderator at a psycho-therapeutic conference held in Central State Hospital, Louisville, Kentucky. He presented a paper on "Psychiatry and Vedanta," on which a panel discussion was held. He was also invited to speak on Hindu religion and philosophy at three different educational and religious centers outside the city. On every occasion he answered questions after the talk.

For about eight weeks of the summer the Swami visited different Vedanta Centers on the West coast, was happy to meet his brother Swamis and their students, and enjoyed their hospitality. At most of the places he was

asked to give public addresses and speak at informal meetings of the devotees and the friends.

Sri Braj Kumar Nehru, the Ambassador of India to the U.S., and his wife visited the Vedanta Society of St. Louis on October 21. After the welcome speech by the Swami, the Ambassador addressed the meeting held in his honour. An informal conversation followed his talk. He answered many questions. A number of distinguished persons came. Refreshments were served.

Three Swamis of the Order visited the Society. An illustrated talk was given by one of them.

The Society's library was utilized by its members and friends. Over forty guests and visitors came from different places at different times. They usually met the Swami and attended the services.

The Swami gave interviews to many seekers of spiritual instruction and others.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASSAM FLOOD RELIEF

AN APPEAL

The public are aware of the devastating floods in Assam which has rendered thousands of people homeless and on the verge of starvation. There were three successive spates of flood and even now most of the worst affected places are unapproachable by any means. To add to the trouble even in the towns like Silchar and Karimganj stock of food-stuff is almost exhausted. The little quantity that is still available is so dear as to be completely beyond the means of the poor or the middle class section of people. Moreover due to the insanitary condition created by the floods there is every chance of an outbreak of epidemics.

The Ramakrishna Mission has started relief work in various forms in a number of villages through the Mission centres of Karimganj and Silchar in Cachar District which is the worst affected area. Doles in food-stuff or in cash where necessary are being distributed in villages or in the Silchar town. From Karimganj centre test relief is being conducted among a large number of families of the backward community, spread over a number of villages. Medicines and clothes are also being distributed.

The work needs a huge sum of money. We have already started the work with the funds at our disposal. But our resources are limited and immediate help is needed to carry on the work already started and extend the area of activity further.

The generous public have always stood by the Ramakrishna Mission during such times of calamity to help the distressed people. We hope their spontaneous and immediate help will flow in and enable us to carry on our relief operations in a successful manner.

All help may be kindly sent to the General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P.O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah.

GAMBHIRANANDA,
General Secretary,
Ramakrishna Mission.

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